

BRAND REAL

The Startup Entrepreneurs' Guide to Effective
Branding and Building Values-Based Organizations

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To Startups and Entrepreneurs

“The first one to know, wins.”

—SUN TZU

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Introduction	5
1 Branding: The Secret Weapon for Startups	11
2 The Big Idea of Brand Real	19
3 Values	23
4 What Is Branding?	29
5 Great Brands Fulfill Simple Promises	37
6 What Is Your Brand's Big Idea?	41
7 Market Research That Powers Creativity	61
8 The Promise of Big Data	77
9 SWOT Analysis	85
10 Naming Your Company and Your Brand	97
11 The Top Twelve Branding Archetypes	115
12 Brand Architecture	125
13 The Visual Identity of a Brand	143
14 Globalization and Branding	183

15	How to Create Strong Brands	189
16	How to Build an Effective Organization Open to Change.	205
17	Identifying Your Core Values	219
18	How to Build a Great Team.	225
19	Your Employer Brand: How to Attract and Keep Talent	233
20	Resilience: A Must-Have for Entrepreneurs	241
21	Cultivating Optimism	261
22	Crisis Management for Startups	271
23	Leadership Coaching	281
24	Getting Backers for Your Startup.	287
25	How to Deliver	305
26	How to Innovate	313
27	Conscious Business, Conscious Leaders.	331
	Appendix 1: Writing a Business Plan.	339
	Appendix 2: How to Create a Marketing Plan	359
	Appendix 3: Social Media for Startups	365
	Appendix 4: Inbound Marketing for Brand Activation	377
	Appendix 5: Intellectual Property	385
	Appendix 6: Launching and Activating Your Brand	393
	Appendix 7: Template for a Creative Brief.	399
	Glossary	403

INTRODUCTION

BRAND REAL: HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

Brand Real is designed as a handbook for startup entrepreneurs. It covers a variety of topics startup entrepreneurs need to know about in order to achieve success.

The guiding idea of *Brand Real* is that successful brands must be built on reality: products and services that deliver real value to your customers, and ways of doing business that reflect your personal values as an entrepreneur and the values of your enterprise and its people.

Branding

Brand Real gives an in-depth account of branding, which is a crucial factor in the success of any startup. Skillful branding is needed to establish your identity in the marketplace and to demonstrate the value of your products and services to your potential customers. A major part of *Brand Real* investigates the strategy and tactics of successful branding,

BRAND REAL: HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

explaining what works and why, based on the deep expertise of long-time experts in the field.

Brand Real shows why a successful brand must be built on reality—on the real values of the startup company and its people, and on the real values its products and services deliver to customers. In today's world of multidirectional instant communication, branding can no longer be an exercise in manipulating perceptions with phony images and clever slogans. You build an effective brand by tapping into the value systems of your customers, by being real with them, and by delivering real value.

Brand Real goes into detail on how to build an effective brand identity that communicates your startup's big idea. It explains techniques, which have been proven effective, for telling your story, and it explores how to name your brand and give it a visual identity using a carefully crafted logo. *Brand Real* maps out the principles of brand architecture, such as whether your enterprise should use one brand or many, and the various ways that ensembles of brands can be related.

Brand Real analyzes branding across cultures, covering the evolution of media and the need for cultural and linguistic analysis when creating brand names and identities. This analysis will allow you to design your enterprise and your brand so that you can succeed in the globalized economy and avoid having your brand trapped in a single local cultural environment.

Building an Effective Organization with a Strong Culture

Brand Real devotes a lot of attention to how, as a startup entrepreneur, you can create an effective organization that embodies your values and can successfully deliver products and services to your customers.

As the leader of a startup enterprise, one of your most vital tasks is to build the company culture in such a way that it reflects your values and attracts people who share those values. A company culture that is true to its own values is essential to attracting talented people and keeping them engaged. When people feel they are part of a great team, they are filled with energy, and their creativity and eagerness to contribute are unleashed.

Brand Real explains the various types of people your startup team will need and shows you how shared values are necessary to enable people of diverse temperaments and professional specialties to work together as a coherent team. Shared values are the key ingredient in an effective organization.

Brand Real shows the startup entrepreneur how to avoid the rigidity and fragmentation that plague so many larger companies. It alerts you to the dangers of the silo mentality that impedes big companies. The silo mentality encourages people within a company to see things in terms of their own narrowly defined departmental interests, and they lose sight of the overall purpose of the enterprise.

Effective Leadership

Brand Real emphasizes that resilience is a necessary quality for startup entrepreneurs. It describes the qualities that make people resilient and

explains how to cultivate these qualities. Again, having clear values and a strong purpose in life play a crucial role in building the personal resilience you need to see your startup through to success.

Brand Real presents techniques for cultivating the realistic optimism that a startup entrepreneur needs in order to persevere in the face of difficulties and keep driving toward success.

Above all, *Brand Real* puts the spotlight on the need for effective leaders to be true to their values and to build teams that share these values. The guiding strategy is to bring to life an enterprise that “walks the walk”—that truly lives by and embodies the shared values at the root of its culture.

The Voices of the Experts We've Worked With

Brand Real includes several pieces contributed by experts we have worked with, who share their deep insights into particular specialties.

Nobody can know everything, but as the leader of a startup you owe it to yourself and to your team to know as much as you can about all the ingredients that enable a startup to succeed. You need to be clear about what you do know and what you don't, so you can engage the appropriate specialists when the need arises.

One of our colleagues, who is a specialist in the field of crisis management, contributed a piece for *Brand Real* about how a startup can prepare a plan in advance to be ready to carry out effective crisis management. This is an area where you cannot afford to wait until the last minute and just hope for the best. Be ready ahead of time!

Another longtime friend, who is a renowned graphic designer, contributed his insights on how to create the visual identity of a brand and on what goes into a compelling graphic design.

BRAND REAL

Two friends, who are specialists in using social media, shared their knowledge about how to use “inbound marketing” when launching your brand. They show how to draw in prospects and convert them to customers.

A professional leadership coach provided her reflection on how a startup entrepreneur can benefit by engaging with a leadership coach.

A former company founder and CEO, who currently works as an advisor, consultant, and mentor to entrepreneurs, CEOs, senior executives, boards, and investors, contributed her expertise on conscious business and conscious leadership principles and practices.

Bonus Sections

For the convenience of our readers, *Brand Real* includes several bonus sections, providing information on areas that are crucial to startup entrepreneurs, although they may not be part of branding per se. These are contained in the appendices.

In the first appendix, *Brand Real* gives a thorough protocol of how to put together a business plan. This is, of course, a necessary task for the startup entrepreneur seeking to attract investors and backers. Your business plan will be what convinces potential backers that the big idea for your brand can work and is worth funding. *Brand Real* also includes in this appendix a section on how to find the right financial backers and how to tell your story effectively,

In the second appendix, relying on the expertise of an accomplished marketing professional, *Brand Real* explains, in detail, what is involved in putting together a marketing plan. This appendix explains how to lay out an effective strategy for letting your potential customers learn

BRAND REAL: HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

about your products and services, and come to know and trust your company brand.

In the third appendix, *Brand Real* gives you an expert's point of view on the use of various types of social media in marketing.

In the fourth appendix, *Brand Real* presents the insights of two specialists in inbound marketing who describe the strategy and tactics of using content-based marketing and social media to attract potential customers, turn them into leads, and finally convert them into customers.

In the fifth appendix, *Brand Real* gives an introduction to the legal issues surrounding intellectual property (like patents, copyrights, and trademarks). It shows how to determine that your brand name and logo are unique and available.

In the sixth appendix, *Brand Real* outlines what is involved in activating and launching a brand—the whole gamut of activities that fall under the broad categories of advertising and marketing.

In the seventh appendix, *Brand Real* includes a template for the “creative brief” you will need to provide when you engage with a graphic designer to work on the visual dimensions of your brand.

Finally, the book includes a glossary providing definitions of the special terms related to branding and graphic design.

CHAPTER

1

BRANDING: THE SECRET WEAPON FOR STARTUPS

Founders of startups are often so busy with a million and one tasks that they do not feel they have the time to concern themselves with branding.

We all know that big companies have dedicated brand managers who oversee their brands, manage the market research, and have proposed designs tested in focus groups to see if the message is hitting home to the intended target audience. Fortunately, in today's digital age, startups can employ the same techniques using social media, without incurring major expenses.

Your brand connects something of tangible value—the product or service that is the result of your big idea—with some recognizable identity in your customers' awareness. Your brand's positioning statement must answer the question foremost in the minds of potential customers: “Why should I do business with you?”

No matter how your potential customers come into contact with you—whether via your website, by personal reference or word of mouth,

BRAND REAL: HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

through write-ups in trade journals or media coverage, or through direct experience with your products or services—they will naturally be forming judgments about the value of your brand, your company, and your products and services. Branding involves a set of techniques and strategies for creating an identity that is memorable and meaningful in people's minds, one that marks your products and services as better than the rest.

The message of *Brand Real* is this: To be effective, branding has to be based on reality, the real value of your products and services to your customers, and the real values by which your enterprise lives and works.

Effective branding should both define who you are and enhance your credibility. It should make you stand out from the competition and show why your products and services are superior. It should have both emotional and cognitive appeal. All in all, it should simplify communications with your customers by distilling the essence of who you are and what you offer into a memorable, evocative, convincing set of names, symbols, and taglines.

Clearly, then, branding is an important weapon in the struggle for competitive success.

For effective branding, you need a very clear and compelling brand promise. Invoking general notions of quality, excellence, vision and values, and using mission statements may be good to have on your website, but effective branding needs to be more than this. What is your simple promise? Effective branding conveys key benefits, differentiates you from the competition, and communicates positive feeling.

Here are some examples of taglines that people connect to, remember, take pride in, and own: