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**The 10 Building Blocks to a Better Brand**

**By Kim Nishida**

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Do you struggle to attract and retain business? Do you yearn to be seen as an expert in the field? In an increasingly challenging market flooded with fierce competitors and extremely savvy consumers, you can learn how to develop a killer brand that will inspire you, attract loyal customers, and knock out the competition.

**The 10 Building Blocks to a Better Brand**

1. Identify your values: This is the most critical step and the one most often overlooked in business. Do some soul searching and get a crystal clear idea of what matters most to you as an individual and then as a company. Your values form the base of your company and should influence every decision, from what kind of toilet paper you buy to the business partners you seek.

2. Identify your mission: Once your values are identified, it's time to write a mission statement. Ask, why does my company exist? What do we aim to do? Write it in simple language that a 12-year old can understand. Do a search on the internet for mission statements and use the most compelling ones as a template. This is the statement that should get you out of bed each morning and inspire you morning, noon, and night.

3. Identify your ideal client: Again, a critical step. Look at your mission and why your company exists at all and ask, "Whom do I serve?" The hard part is getting as specific as possible to the point of potentially turning off a lot of other people. Don't worry. The biggest mistake you can make is trying to please everyone. This dilutes your service/product so much that you really don't strike a nerve with anyone. No one will have a compelling enough reason to buy from you. By turning some people off, you attract others who will bond with you for life. And a final benefit to knowing the specifics of your ideal client is you then have a much better idea of where to look for them.

4. Create an emotional connection: Every potential customer wants to know one thing, "What's in it for me?" In order to compel someone to pull out their money and buy, you need to connect them to you in an emotional way. How are you going to make their life better? What pain is your product or service

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going to eliminate? Watch some television and notice how the best commercials create an emotional atmosphere. Which commercials get your attention, which ones stick with you, and how do they get their message across?

5. Identify the benefits vs. the features: Know your product/services inside and out. But instead of just listing the features, describe them in terms of how the client will benefit. Remember, it's all about creating that emotional connection with your ideal client and telling them how you can make their life better.

6. Create an experience: Why should consumers buy from you as opposed to any one of your competitors? What makes you unique? Successful companies are now in the business of creating experiences that enrich lives. Starbucks does not just sell coffee. From the music they play (and sell) to

the comfortable furniture and inviting décor they offer, they create an atmosphere that people will pay for above and beyond a beverage in a cup.

7. Commit to a message: How do your values and mission tie into your image? Carefully look at what matters most to you and broadcast that to your ideal client. Once you are clear on your message, stand behind it and don't waffle.

8. Enforce consistency: This also relates to your values and mission. Once you are clear about why you are in business, maintain your integrity, from the level of service you provide and your logo and printed materials to the way you follow-up with customers and the stamps you buy. Be conscious of every detail and match it to your values, your mission, and your message.

9. Have the courage to reinvent yourself: Even (or especially) if you have been in business for a long time, take the time to ask, who do we REALLY want to be? You might have created your business without being clear about your mission, or your mission might have changed. Or because the climate and the market constantly evolve, you might have hit the target five years ago, but have lost your edge since then. Be brave enough to ask if your current image is right. If not, this is the time to reconnect with your current mission.

10. Lastly, beware of following trends: If you want longevity, don't fall prey to the seduction of the latest trend. Besides, if something is trendy, it's probably already too late to jump on that bandwagon. Keep looking inward at what you stand for and forward at how your company will change lives. Build trust by showing you aren't fickle or easily swayed by the flavor of the month.

### **Great Brands Depend on Attention to the Brand Architecture**

**By Richard Cunningham**

Do you have the architecture in place to make sure each and every brand contact sends the right message?

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Thinking in terms of architecture, a building that looks great and catches your attention is probably designed so that each component looks perfect and enhances the overall effect of the building.

In the audiobook, "Sound Advice on Brand Marketing," author Tom Miller says, "Great architecture works because of attention to detail, and great brands depend on the same level of attention." Each component of a brand that touches the customer must support and enhance the overall message.

A brand architecture also builds a connection between corporate brands, master brands, product brands, and branded features, which, according to Miller, "makes decisions easier when it comes to messaging and graphic design."

Miller suggests everyone take a fresh look at their own brand architecture, beginning with a review of all current marketing materials. "Is the message consistent? Does the look and feel convey the value of the brand? Is there room for improvement?" Once a brand is viewed as architecture, it may never look the same. Says Miller, "It may be the beginning of building your own best brand."

Tom Miller offers branding advice each week in the free audio newsletter from What's Working in Biz,

Richard Cunningham is a principal of What's Working in Biz,

, a publisher

of business audiobooks and online audio programs on marketing, sales, and small business strategies.

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