



**HARNESS YOUR
DISTINCT ADVANTAGE**

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myths BUSTED



Twins and authors of *Stand Out*, Winnie Brignac Hart and Lorrie Brignac Lee, dismiss misconceptions of brands regarding how to stand out in today's aggressive market.

01
a brand is a
company's logo

02
in today's overcrowded
marketplace, it is impossible for
a company to truly stand out

03
everyone is a potential
customer

04
what you do not know cannot
hurt you

05
do not judge a book by
its cover

a brand is a company's logo

A brand used to be considered a logo, a slogan, a particular design or color combination, an advertisement, or even a brochure. But today, these visual elements are only an outward expression, and a small part of what makes up what we recognize as a company's expression of its brand.

In today's business environment, a brand is a set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for someone's decision to choose one product or service over another. It is an intangible asset for any company, and possibly the most valuable asset a company owns.

Your brand is what you are. It comprises many things that define who you are as a business. These things are mostly intangible—like your purpose for being in business, your reputation, values and beliefs, and your unique advantage (the specific qualities and strengths that differentiate your product or service). Add to this mix the emotional impressions and experiences that customers have when interacting with your company and you have an idea of what defines your brand.

Marketing is what you do. The tangible, visible things, like your company name, logo, signage, design elements, website, and printed materials, are part of your marketing efforts. They are what you do. Ideally, these tangible elements should be an accurate representation of what you are. If these intangible and tangible things align to create an authentic and consistent impression of what



you are and what you do, then you have a much greater chance of standing out and growing from a good company into a great one.

Successful brands need to focus on employees living the brand and marketing from the inside out. Marketing can no longer be a 'department'.

in today's overcrowded marketplace, it is impossible for a company to truly stand out

To most consumers, competing products do look almost identical. Yet, a familiar and trusted brand has the ability to cut through the clutter—especially when a prospect needs the product or service that it offers. The obvious question is: How does a brand become 'familiar and trusted?' And for emerging businesses, how can they stand out from their competitors in a way that people learn to know and trust them?

My sister Lorrie and I are identical twins. Being that we are identical, we know a lot about the confusion and frustration that come from a lack of clarity when things look the same.

We live in a world that appreciates and expects individual differences in appearance and behavior. So when we encounter two identical individuals (like Lorrie and myself), this experience challenges our beliefs about the way that the world works.

Of course, identical twins are never exactly alike, yet we cannot stop ourselves from comparing them and trying to find the differences that help us tell them apart. By taking a closer look at twins, we can learn a great deal about the concept of differentiation. By looking past what is just intriguing, we can learn about how we perceive differences in anyone or anything. When I look at my twin, I can experience how others view me—and actually see myself from outside of myself.

From first-hand experience at refining our individuality throughout our lives, we have perfected the ability to perceive distinct differences in other people, other

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companies, and other brands. What we have learned is that to stand out, you need to be more of what makes you who you are—those values, passions, talents, and experiences that make your business what it is—those positive qualities that your customers already appreciate. Your challenge is to identify and nurture them, expose them, and promote them—because they are your distinct advantage and the source of your success.

everyone is a potential customer

Actually, if the effectiveness of your lead generation process is based only on the number of leads your marketing team generates, then it is likely that there is a lot of time being wasted chasing leads that are not ‘ideal.’ What is an ‘ideal lead?’ This is a prospect that fits your defined customer profile and is interested in what you have to offer. This person sees value from using your product or service and can appreciate its differences.

Ideal leads are an issue of quality over quantity, and for some organizations this may require a new perspective on leads. In actuality, bringing in fewer leads can result in more revenue and less time converting ideal leads into customers. Your sales team works best with leads that are a good fit for what you have to offer and there is a strong possibility that when presented with the right offer, the leads are ready and willing to make a decision.

The first step to creating an ideal lead flow is to agree on a set of criteria that defines an ideal lead for your company, and then develop a profile to better focus your sales and marketing team’s efforts. Your research will allow you to refine your ideal lead profiles overtime and make it clear what qualities best identify your true prospects.

Once you understand what your ideal leads look like, and what motivates them, you can develop content directed to them—information they are looking for to solve problems or overcome specific challenges. The more information you can provide, and the more helpful you can be, the better. Providing them with useful information builds trust so that when they are ready to buy, you are top-of-mind. This is marketing through attraction and relationship building.

Once you establish a relationship, you are able to identify where a prospect is in your sales funnel model. This enables you to develop marketing messages that fit who they are and where they are in the process of becoming a customer.

what you do not know cannot hurt you

When we were little, our dad used to say, “You don’t know what you don’t know.” It was constant. He would drop us off at school, roll down the window, and yell, “Winnie and Lorrie—you don’t know what you don’t know.” We would bow our heads quietly and keep going. When we had birthdays, friends over, and Sunday dinners, he would say, “You don’t know what you don’t know.” We would look at him and say, “yeah dad...”

It took us a long time to understand what he was trying to teach us—to understand why he kept repeating himself and how it became a core way of thinking in our upbringing. Fast forward to today—there is so much out there that we do not know.

Once upon a time, companies did not have to worry much about what customers had to say about their brands. Customers’ opinions were shared with only the few people they knew and wanted to tell. In today’s online environment, reputation has become the big challenge. Communication is a wide-open book where customers can share their thoughts, opinions, compliments, and complaints, about companies anytime and anywhere. A customer’s negative opinion about your company or its products can be spread around the world within moments and remain there available for others to read for years.

We recommend that you track what is being said about your company, both the positive and negative comments,

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across all media as if your reputation depends on it. Because it does. Make consistent monitoring of your reputation your mantra—because negative perceptions and comments can, overnight, wreck your company’s standing that you have built through years of hard work.

We all have a reputation, irrespective of whether it reflects who we are or not. Do you know the condition of your business’s reputation? Do you know what people are saying about your business and brand? If not, then you need to get a clearer picture of these external perceptions because not knowing what your customers and prospects are saying can be toxic to your growth.

do not judge a book by its cover

This metaphorical phrase means you should not prejudge the worth or value of something by its outward appearance alone. But guess what? We do!

As twins, we have developed a heightened awareness of the importance of perception and reality. Being constantly mistaken for my sister, and vice versa, can do that. From the first-hand experience of dealing with misperceptions



and working hard to refine our individual identities, we have honed the ability to perceive distinct differences in other people, companies, and brands. And in our line of work, we are able to use this ability to help our client/brands learn to see themselves more objectively.

Identifying the characteristics that distinguish a company from its competitors has never been more essential for success than it is now. The internet and global media have drawn every industry into international focus. With these changes come expanded opportunities as well as expanded exposure. If a company does not tell its own story, someone else will create it for them.

In the process of standing out, you learn to define and communicate your purpose—who you are and what you stand for. And you make your purpose a focus of your marketing efforts and messaging (what you do). Next, you explore your brand personality to find out

which parts best represent the strengths and memorable qualities of the main character of your brand story (your company). All of these steps can establish and direct how your business can become noticed, remembered, and distinguished in the marketplace.

Ultimately, distinct advantage is where what you offer aligns with the distinct needs of your prospects and customers in a place where your competitors do not, cannot, or would not.

Instead of trying to be all things to all people, your purpose and distinct advantage help you and your business get ‘pointy’—more focused on who you are and what you are in business to do.

If we focus on what makes each of us distinct, prospects will not be confused by everything looking the same. ■