



# Designing Brand Identity

sixth edition

**Alina Wheeler**  
**Rob Meyerson**

a comprehensive guide to  
the world of brands and branding

**WILEY**



# Designing Brand Identity

sixth edition



Face ID





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Alina Wheeler  
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sixth edition

a comprehensive guide to  
the world of brands and branding



Face ID

WILEY

**Designing Brand Identity**  
is a quick reference guide.  
All subject matter is organized  
by spread for ease of access.

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**How to use this book**

- Use it as a guide for your brand initiative.
- Refresh what you already know.
- Learn something new.
- Educate your client.
- Educate your staff.
- Educate your students.
- Build a better brand.
- Keep the process on track.
- Establish shared vocabulary.
- Set benchmarks.
- Ground yourself in the fundamentals.
- Write a better proposal.
- Write a better strategy.
- Be inspired by a case study.
- Bust through silos.
- Get suits and creatives communicating.
- Quote an expert or an avatar.
- Sticky note your favorite spreads.
- Use the diagrams in a presentation.
- Get outside your comfort zone.
- Recharge your batteries.
- Explain your job to your family.
- Give it as a birthday present.
- Use it to beautify your coffee table.

**Part 1 presents the fundamental concepts needed to kick-start the branding process and creates a shared vocabulary for the entire team.**

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## In memory of Alina Wheeler (1948–2023)

With the 2003 publication of her groundbreaking book, *Designing Brand Identity*, Alina Wheeler demystified branding. Over the next 20 years and five new editions—including this one—her perennial best seller has kept us attuned to shifts in culture, technology, and best practices. Alina’s profound, worldwide impact on the branding and design community extends far beyond her written works—she regularly consulted, served on boards, spoke, taught, and mentored. While Alina’s books have illuminated branding for countless students and professionals, those who knew her will remember her warmth, wisdom, and wit. To every project, every relationship, every conversation, Alina brought a touch of magic. Our global community has lost a guiding light.

Ever the strategist, Alina devised a plan for the future of *Designing Brand Identity*. Her handpicked coauthor and team, along with collaborators around the world, now have the honor and privilege of carrying her work forward to inform and inspire future generations.

I AM YOUR BIGGEST FAN.

▷ ALINA



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### No one does it alone

Books, like brands, are built over time. This book is the result of extensive collaboration with our colleagues around the world. Thank you for sharing your time, wisdom, and insights. To our dream team, we are eternally grateful for your expertise, patience, and sense of humor. Lastly, we couldn’t create this global resource without the support of our families. Love, indeed, does conquer all.

---

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Al Ries, Milton Glaser, Dan Wieden, Jeremy Bullmore, Ivan Chermayeff, and Tony Hsieh.

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## Q&A with Alina and Rob

The first five editions of *Designing Brand Identity* had a single author: Alina Wheeler. For the sixth edition, Alina asked Rob Meyerson, brand consultant and author, to join her as both a coauthor and a steward of the book going forward. To shed light on the thinking behind this change, their collaboration, and the book's future, each coauthor answered three questions.

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### Alina Wheeler

#### What are your biggest takeaways from twenty years of writing *Designing Brand Identity*?

Since the first edition, we've put supercomputers in our pockets, fallen in and out of love with social media, weathered a pandemic, and witnessed massive change in the climate and global politics. At the same time, branding has changed immeasurably. Now, major rebrands are mainstream news. People use (and misuse) phrases like "on brand" in daily conversation. Brand expression is omnipresent across all digital platforms, content marketing is a cost of entry, and armies of algorithms track our every move. We continue to see a dramatic increase in best practices across organizations big and small, B2C and B2B, driven by new generations of agile leaders. And companies are rebranding more often—identities that would have once lasted 20 years are now revised after just five.

Writing *Designing Brand Identity* has reminded me how much courage it takes to effect change. And that no one does it alone. Through this book, I've aspired to capture the strategic intelligence and boundless creativity of our colleagues around the world. We are infinitely grateful to all who have shared their time, stories, wisdom, and insights as they build the brands of the future.

#### Why a sixth edition? Why now?

When I began writing *Designing Brand Identity* in the early 2000s, there was no comparable book. It was the resource I needed in the heat of a new engagement—a book that would provide a shared vocabulary and process for management and the marketing team, supply a list of the major brand name changes in the last century, and remind me of the irrefutable fundamentals of branding. It was a way to keep me up to speed on the most current thinking on user experience, approaches to decision making, and global best practices.

Since then, hundreds of smart, new branding books have come out. But *Designing Brand Identity* remains the most comprehensive resource available. Over 20 years, five editions, and eleven languages, it's been a living document in which I've continuously collected and updated best practices, processes, and trends. The sixth edition is the strongest one yet. As long as branding exists, *Designing Brand Identity* will always have new insights to share.

**As long as branding exists, this book will always have new insights to share.**

#### How (and why) did you select a coauthor?

After 20 years, it's time for a new generation of brand thinkers to take the lead. Two things have allowed me to be effective writing this book: being "in the game"—working with clients, attending conferences, networking with peers—and committing to creating the best book I could. So, when I began the daunting search for a coauthor, those were my top priorities. Who's in the game? Who will truly commit to helping me create the best possible version of *Designing Brand Identity*?

Rob Meyerson has occupied every seat at the branding table, from start-ups to mature, multinational, public companies. He's led strategy teams at world-renowned brand consultancies and boutique agencies. He has lived and worked in Silicon Valley, Shanghai, and Southeast Asia; he understands the importance of cultural insights. As Global Head of Brand Architecture and Naming at HP, he hired and managed top-tier branding firms and was "in the room" helping to create a new, multi-billion-dollar brand—Hewlett Packard Enterprise. And as an independent consultant, he's demonstrated his commitment to understanding, improving, and educating the global branding community through his writing and podcast.

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## Rob Meyerson

### What's changed in the sixth edition?

Our main goal was to ensure the book is not only up to date, but forward thinking in terms of how brands are built and maintained, trends impacting the world of brands and branding, and examples of amazing work. We've added detail and rigor to pages about brand strategy, brand architecture, and naming, as well as ideas that have more recently gained relevance in branding, such as AI, social justice, and evidence-based marketing. And we continued our efforts to feature a diverse cross-section of work in terms of geography, agency size, and types of client companies.

Just as important is what hasn't changed. We've preserved the three-part structure (Basics, Process, Best Practices), built on the comprehensiveness of previous editions, and factored in insights from dozens of industry experts. *Designing Brand Identity* is still organized as a reference book, with bite-sized pieces of useful information—a book for busy people undertaking the monumental challenge of building or overhauling a brand.

### What did you learn working on this book?

Creating a new edition of *Designing Brand Identity* is a massive undertaking: Over 150 two-page spreads, each with its own set of challenges, examples to source, and experts to consult. It means capturing, distilling, and organizing the collective wisdom of an industry, then sharing it back in an easily digestible format. Doing so forced me to gain a deeper understanding of some topics and learn about others for the first time. Alina's assertion that "no one does it alone" is more than a statement of fact—it's a mindset.

## Creating this edition meant capturing, distilling, and organizing the collective wisdom of an industry.

It's been an honor to work with Alina on this iconic book. Doing so gave me a front-row seat to the impact she's had on the lives and careers of so many people in our industry. Time and again, senior executives and acclaimed designers would jump at the opportunity to contribute to the new edition—not only because they relied on this book early in their careers (many of them did) but because of how giving Alina is with her time, attention, and expertise. I'm certainly not new to collaborating, networking, or community building, but working with Alina on this book has been a master class.

### What does the future hold for *Designing Brand Identity*?

From our earliest conversations about this edition, Alina and I have been bouncing ideas off of each other: What if the book became an interactive experience? What if readers could access content from past editions—see old case studies and track changing trends? What if every case study had an associated audio or video component? We've talked about different formats, brand extensions, and co-branding opportunities. But, as experienced marketers, we know there's a more important question: What do you want to see from *Designing Brand Identity* in the future? Please get in touch with your thoughts and ideas, and sign up at [dbibook.com/news](http://dbibook.com/news) to stay in the loop on future plans.

## Over twenty years of *Designing Brand Identity*

A lot has changed in the decades since *Designing Brand Identity* was first published in 2003. Facebook launched and Apple introduced the iPhone. The solar system lost a planet, the Earth's temperature increased another 0.4° C, and the S&P 500 tripled. The world of brands and branding reflects these changes, responds to them, and, in some cases, helps usher them in. Over six editions, *Designing Brand Identity* has helped tell this story.

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>2000</b></p> <p>British Petroleum rebrands to BP<br/>Amazon rebrands<br/>International Space Station opens<br/>AOL purchases Time Warner</p>  | <p><b>2003</b></p> <p><i>Designing Brand Identity</i> is published<br/>Tesla is founded<br/>UPS rebrands</p>   | <p><b>2006</b></p> <p><i>Designing Brand Identity</i> 2nd edition is published<br/>Twitter launches<br/>Spotify launches<br/>Google acquires YouTube<br/>Nintendo Wii launches<br/>Pluto is reclassified as a dwarf planet</p> | <p><b>2008</b></p> <p>Financial crisis erupts (Lehman bankruptcy)<br/>Walmart rebrands (with "Spark" logo)<br/>Airbnb launches</p>  |
| <p><b>2001</b></p> <p>September 11 attacks<br/>Enron goes bankrupt<br/>Andersen Consulting becomes Accenture<br/>Wikipedia launches</p> <p><b>2002</b></p> <p>Homeland Security Act<br/>Geico Gecko is introduced<br/>LinkedIn launches<br/>SpaceX is founded</p> | <p><b>2004</b></p> <p>Facebook is formed<br/>Spirit and Opportunity land on Mars<br/>Dove "Campaign for Real Beauty" launches<br/>Unilever rebrands</p> <p><b>2005</b></p> <p>Reddit founded<br/>Hurricane Katrina<br/>Angela Merkel is elected<br/>Amazon launches Amazon Prime</p> | <p><b>2007</b></p> <p>iPhone is introduced<br/>Amazon releases Kindle<br/>Scientists announce the Arctic region is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet</p>   | <p><b>2009</b></p> <p><i>Designing Brand Identity</i> 3rd edition is published<br/>Barack Obama becomes the first African American president of the United States<br/>Old Spice launches "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like"<br/>Uber is founded<br/>Venmo is founded<br/>Sina Weibo launches</p> |

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**2010**

Instagram launches  
Xiaomi launches  
New York's School of Visual Arts launches master's in branding  
Burj Khalifa, world's tallest building, opens

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**2013**

*Designing Brand Identity* 4th edition is published  
Snowden reveals secrets  
Adobe releases Creative Cloud  
Slack launches

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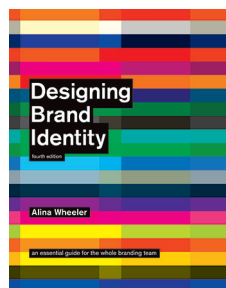
**2014**

Airbnb rebrands  
PayPal rebrands

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**2015**

The US Supreme Court recognizes a constitutional right to same-sex marriage  
Google announces Alphabet



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**2018**

*Designing Brand Identity* 5th edition is published  
Dunkin' Donuts rebrands to Dunkin'  
Uber rebrands

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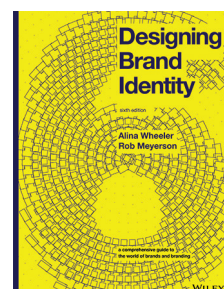
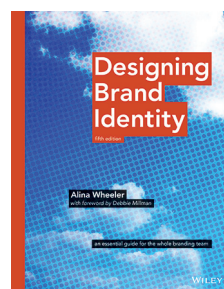
**2019**

Protests in Hong Kong  
Mastercard rebrands  
Volkswagen rebrands

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**2020**

COVID-19 pandemic  
Brexit becomes official  
George Floyd is murdered by police  
#BlackoutTuesday



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**2011**

Starbucks Coffee changes name to Starbucks  
Snapchat launches  
First full version of Minecraft is released

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**2012**

eBay rebrands  
Twitter rebrands  
Higgs boson (aka the God particle) discovered  
Microsoft rebrands

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**2016**

Instagram rebrands  
Kodak rebrands  
Google's AI beats world Go champion

---

**2017**

Mozilla rebrands via open design process  
Burberry rebrands  
Chobani rebrands  
TikTok launches  
Women's March in Washington, D.C.

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**2021**

Facebook, Inc. changes name to Meta  
Burger King rebrands  
Kia rebrands

---

**2022**

Roe v. Wade overturned  
Russia invades Ukraine  
NASA's Webb telescope produces deepest, sharpest image of universe to date

---

**What's next?**

New technology, new trends, new brands, and rebrands  
Evolution, revolution, missteps, and miracles  
Are you a newcomer?  
A comeback kid?  
How will you brand the future?

**Understand me.**

**Make a difference in my life.**

**Surprise me often.**

**Give me more than I paid for.**

**Show me you love me.**

Alan Jacobson

Principal  
Exit Design



## About the Companion Website

This book is accompanied by an instructor website

**[https://www.wiley.com/go/designing\\_brand\\_identity\\_6e](https://www.wiley.com/go/designing_brand_identity_6e)**



The Instructor site is password protected and includes the power point slides.



# 1 Basics

**Part 1 illuminates the difference between brand and brand identity, and what it takes to be the best. Don't bypass the fundamentals in the speed of a new project. Establish a shared vocabulary for the entire branding team.**

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## Brand basics

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## Brand Brand basics

As competition creates infinite choices, companies look for ways to connect emotionally with customers, create loyalty, and make themselves irreplaceable. A strong brand stands out in a densely crowded marketplace. People trust brands, identify with them, and believe in their superiority. How a brand is perceived affects its success—whether it's a start-up, a nonprofit, or a product.

**Businesses are now only as strong as their brands, and nothing else offers business leaders so much potential leverage.**

Jim Stengel

*Grow: How Ideals Power Growth and Profit at the World's Greatest Companies*

## Who are you? Who needs to know? How will they find out? Why should they care?

**Brands now appear regularly on balance sheets in many companies. The intangible value of the brand is often much greater than the corporation's tangible assets.**

Wally Olins

*The Brand Book*

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### Three primary functions of a brand

David Haigh, CEO, Brand Finance

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#### Navigation

Brands help consumers choose from a bewildering array of choices.

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#### Reassurance

Brands communicate the intrinsic quality of the product or service and reassure customers that they have made the right choice.

---

#### Engagement

Brands use distinctive imagery, language, and associations to encourage customers to identify with the brand.

#### Dupont

A company and a brand



Dupont: Lippincott

#### LEGO®

A product and a brand



LEGO®: Interbrand

#### Zelle

A service and a brand



**We define brand as the intersection of promise and perception.**

Ken Pasternak  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Two by Four

**Brand touchpoints**

Each touchpoint is an opportunity to increase awareness.



**Girls Who Code**

A nonprofit and a brand



Girls Who Code: Hyperakt

**City of Vienna**

A place and a brand



City of Vienna: Saffron

**MrBeast**

A person and (arguably) a brand



Feastables: Enlisted

## Branding Brand basics

Branding is a disciplined process used to build awareness, attract new customers, and extend customer loyalty. Positioning a brand to be irreplaceable requires a daily desire to be the best. To be successful, brand builders need to stick to the basics, stay calm on the roller coaster of relentless change, and seize every opportunity to be the brand of choice.

## Branding is deliberate differentiation.

Debbie Millman  
Chair + Cofounder  
Master's Program in Branding  
School of Visual Arts

**We continue to invest in our core strengths. First, we don't skimp on understanding the consumer. Second is innovation . . . And third is branding . . . We're delivering more messages to our consumers.**

AG Lafley  
CEO, Procter & Gamble  
*Business Week*

---

## Types of branding

### Co-branding

Partnering with another brand to achieve reach

### Digital branding

Web, social media, search engine optimization, driving commerce on the web

### Personal branding

The way an individual builds a reputation

### Cause branding

Aligning a brand with a charitable cause; or corporate social responsibility

### Country branding

Efforts to attract tourists and businesses

**Emotional branding is a dynamic cocktail of anthropology, imagination, sensory experiences, and visionary approach to change.**

Marc Gobé  
*Emotional Branding*

## Process

1: conducting research

2: clarifying strategy

3: designing identity

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## When to start the process

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### New company, new product

I'm starting a new business. I need a business card and a website.

We've developed a new product and it needs a name and a logo yesterday.

We need to raise millions of dollars. The campaign needs to have its own identity.

We're going public in the fall.

We need to raise venture capital, even though we do not have our first customer.

---

### Name change

Our name no longer fits who we are and the businesses we are in.

We need to change our name for legal reasons.

Our name has negative connotations in our new markets.

Our name misleads customers.

We merged.

We need a new name that works in China.

---

### Revitalize a brand

We want to reposition and refresh the global brand.

We need to communicate more clearly about who we are.

We're going global—we need help to enter new markets.

No one knows who we are.

Our stock is devalued.

We want to appeal to a new and more affluent market.

---

### Revitalize a brand identity

We are innovators. We look behind the times.

We want our customers to have a great mobile experience.

Our identity does not position us shoulder to shoulder with our competitors.

We have 80 divisions and inconsistent nomenclature.

I am embarrassed when I give out my business card.

Everyone in the world recognizes our icon, but admit it—he needs a facelift.

We love our symbol—it is known by our market. The problem is you cannot read our logotype.

---

### Create an integrated system

We do not present a consistent face to our customers.

We need a new brand architecture to deal with acquisitions.

Our packaging is not distinctive. Our competitors look better than we do, and their sales are going up.

All of our marketing looks like it comes from different companies.

We need to look strong and communicate that we are one global company.

Every division does its own thing when marketing. This is inefficient, frustrating, and not cost-effective. Everyone is reinventing the wheel.

---

### When companies merge

We want to send a clear message to our stakeholders that this is a merger of equals.

We want to communicate that  $1 + 1 = 4$ .

We want to build on the brand equity of the merging companies.

We need to send a strong signal to the world that we are the new industry leader.

We need a new name.

How do we evaluate our acquisition's brand and fold it into our brand architecture?

Two industry leaders are merging. How do we manage our new identity?

4: creating touchpoints

5: managing assets

## Brand identity Brand basics

Brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, watch it move. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meaning accessible.

Great brands are like friends—you encounter a huge number of them every day, but you only remember the ones you love.

Luc Speisser  
Global Chief Innovation Officer  
Landor

Design differentiates and embodies the intangibles—emotion, context, and essence—that matter most to consumers.

Moira Cullen  
Strategic Advisor, Design  
Rethink Food



First introduced in 2019, Mini Brands is a series of toys made by Zuru. Each set contains five branded miniatures, from Airheads candy to Zatarain's Jambalaya Mix.





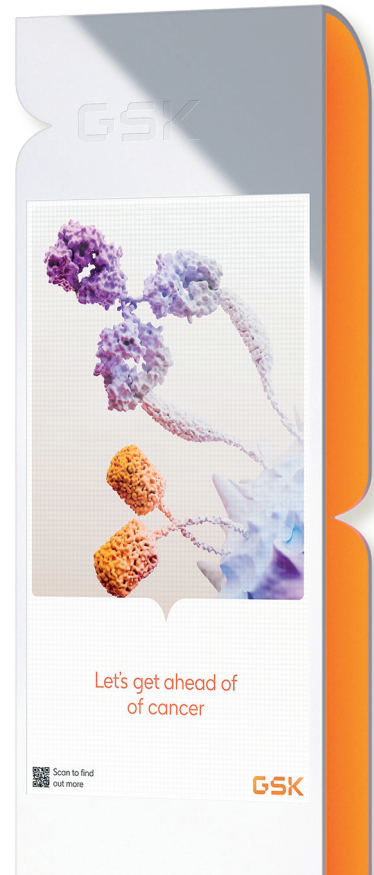
Adventr



BCG X



Instagram



Let's get ahead of cancer

Scan to find out more

GSK



Mastercard



Piedmont Art Walk

## Brand strategy Brand basics

Effective brand strategy articulates the ideas upon which a brand is built—ideas that unify and align identity, actions, and communications. The best strategies are clear, consistent, and customer-focused. When well executed, they help brands defeat or even prevent competition.

Brand strategy is a road map that guides marketing, makes the sales team's job easier, and provides clarity, context, and inspiration to employees. It should align with business strategy, reflect values and culture, and define the brand's target customers and positioning.

A smart strategy reflects an in-depth

understanding of the customer's needs and perceptions as well as the competitive landscape.

The strategy must be customer-focused but should also resonate with other stakeholders: employees, the board, core suppliers, and other important partners.

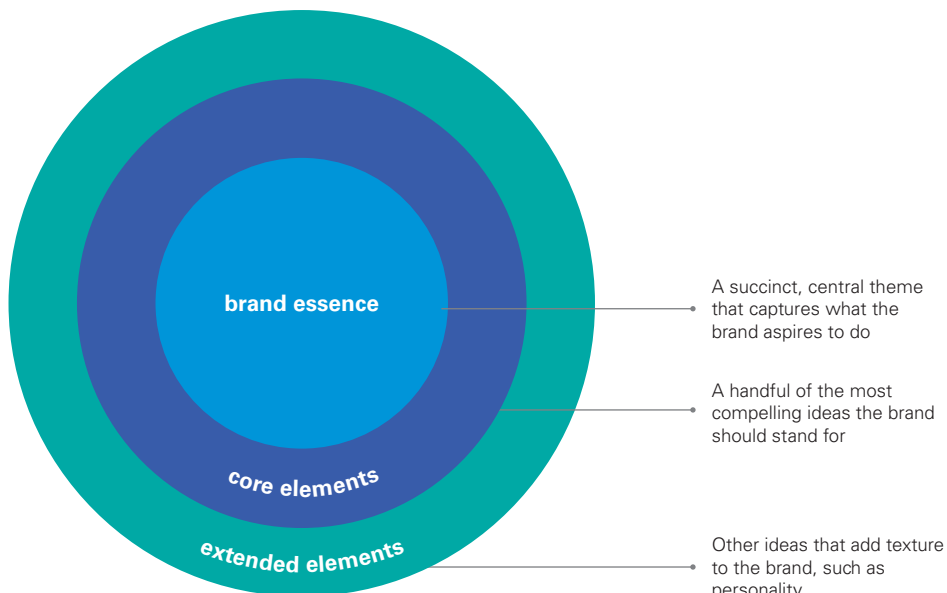
## Strategy is an informed opinion about how to win.

Mark Pollard

Author, *Strategy Is Your Words*

### A brand strategy framework: the brand vision model

David Aaker



**The brand vision model is multidimensional, has core and extended elements, includes an optional essence, is tailored to the brand's context, is aspirational, and can be adapted to different product markets.**

David Aaker

Vice Chairman  
Prophet Brand Strategy  
Professor Emeritus  
Berkeley-Haas School of Business

Brand strategy frameworks often feature many boxes or other shapes for the strategist to populate with attributes, personality traits, values, or benefits. One of the simplest and most popular frameworks, David Aaker's brand vision model, simply prioritizes desired brand associations in concentric circles and captures the brand's central theme in a succinct brand essence.

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## Three axioms and three questions that summarize brand strategy

Mark Ritson

**The demand for brand strategy has never been greater or more tantalizing. It's not just that most companies are struggling with brand strategy—that's been the case for decades. It is that these companies now know they are struggling and are actively seeking assistance.**

Mark Ritson

Brand Consultant +  
Former Marketing Professor

### Axioms

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#### Diagnosis first, strategy second

Take a step back. Learn about the brand, business goals, customers, and competition.

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#### Strategy is choosing what you will not do

Focus. Ensure that resources are invested in the most rewarding places. Cut the fat.

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#### Strategy before tactics

Before considering communications, distribution, or other tactical details, set your strategy.

### Questions

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#### Who are you targeting?

Look at the market, your competitors, and your resources. Decide which customers to go after.

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#### What do you want to stand for?

What do you want your customers to think when they think of your brand? Own a position.

---

#### How will you achieve this?

Outline objectives for success. Make a short list of clear, specific goals that will guide activities.

### Disneyland is the exemplar of theme parks, and it is always innovating.

David Aaker

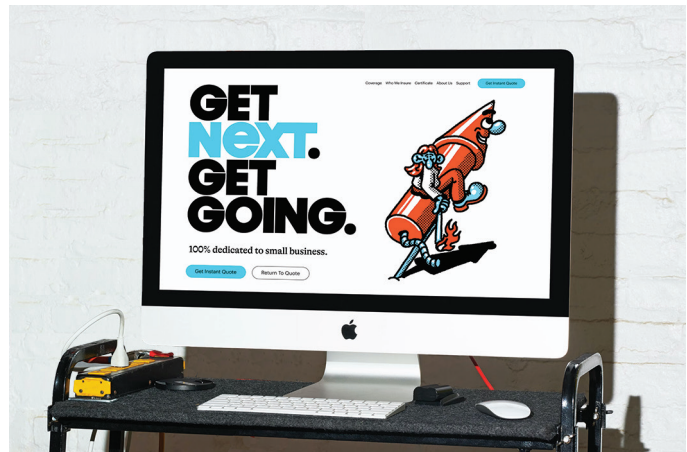
Vice Chairman  
Prophet Brand Strategy  
Professor Emeritus  
Berkeley-Haas School of Business

In 1955, Walt Disney brought his vision for a theme park to life by opening Disneyland in Southern California. The park's brand essence, "Family Magic," captures its aspiration to be the happiest place on Earth.



Alina Wheeler's daughter, Tearson, with her family at Disney World, 2007

Brand strategy is not just for world-famous consumer brands like Disney. In the line, "Get Going," COLLINS captured the brand strategy of NEXT, an insurance company for small businesses. NEXT and COLLINS realized that insurance companies marketed themselves in two ways: as overly earnest protectors from doom or by relying on silly animal mascots. Recognizing that small businesses thought of insurance as a way to take on intelligent risk, COLLINS suggested NEXT stand out by focusing on opportunity rather than fear, emboldening business owners to take smart leaps.



NEXT Insurance Inc.