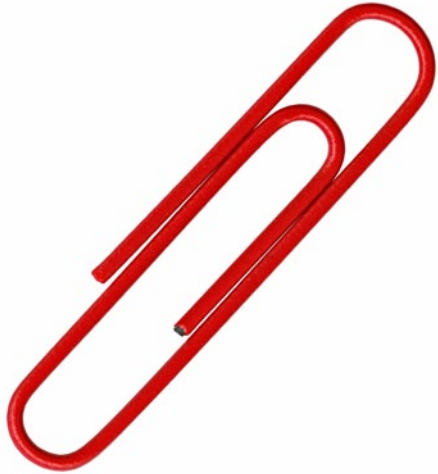




Four Pillars of Branding Success



“There is no middle
ground.”

—George Lois

About the author



George Pytlik is a brand expert adept at combining the best branding and marketing strategies with digital technologies. Passionate about helping small companies go up against the giants with confidence, he works with CEOs of small and medium-sized businesses to give their companies the same high quality, polished, coordinated brand messaging used by the world's largest companies. The result is increased visibility and credibility in the marketplace, leading to rapid sales growth. His marketing efforts have been featured on national TV news and have transformed the sales results of brands ranging from startups to billion dollar household names.

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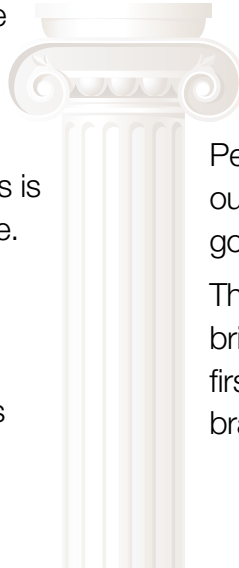
There's power in simplicity.



While challenging in its execution, great branding is simple in concept. When you look at the most successful brands, their effectiveness is based on four pillars.

Unfortunately, most people think of these four pillars in reverse order. They believe that you first work to create knowledge, which leads to esteem. They think that esteem brings you relevance and that this is what differentiates you in the marketplace.

In actual fact, it's the opposite. In today's over-communicated world, people won't care about your brand unless they first know what makes it different. And just as



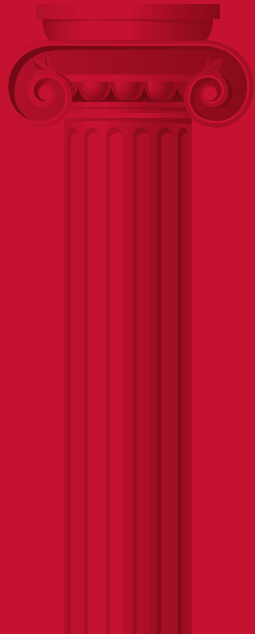
important, that difference must be relevant to the lives of your prospects. Your brand needs to mean something.

People don't have time to figure stuff like this out. There are too many choices, too much going on and too little time.

The combination of differentiation with relevance brings esteem to your brand. Only when these first three pillars are applied consistently will your brand gain awareness in the marketplace.

Count to four. Boldly.

All successful branding is structured upon four key pillars



1 Differentiation

What makes your brand unique

2 Relevance

Making that difference mean something to the audience

3 Esteem

How highly regarded is your brand?

4 Knowledge

Consumers need to know and understand your brand before they can commit

1 Differentiation



The first and most important pillar is your distinctiveness or differentiation. The great brands establish very clearly and quickly what makes them different from everyone else.

Your differentiation sets you apart and usually reflects a passion for some aspect of life or business that no other brand can meet in quite the same way.



Apple has an unwavering passion for design and user interface that is simply unmatched by other brands. Quizno's and Subway are two sandwich brands, but each is distinct.



What was the basis for starting your business? Typically, when asked this question, business owners point to some need they identified that has not been sufficiently met by existing brands.

Whatever that point of difference is, you need to make it crystal clear. Work to make it part of your corporate DNA.

2 Relevance



Your differentiation needs to be relevant to people's lives. Even when the brand does not provide an essential service or product, it can still become relevant with the right branding strategy.

Starbucks worked to make itself relevant. When the brand first started out, most people made coffee at home before going to work. Howard Schultz made his brand relevant as the ideal gathering place where people could meet on the way to or after work.

People around the world are now willing to pay premium prices for hand-crafted coffee beverages instead of brewing their own. Coffee



stopped being a commodity and became important because of the distinctiveness that Starbucks made relevant.

It wasn't just the coffee product that gained meaning, but the experience of buying the product. Remember that scene in "You've Got Mail" showing the ordering process? The process, complex as it seemed, became culturally meaningful and changed the behavior of millions.

3 Esteem



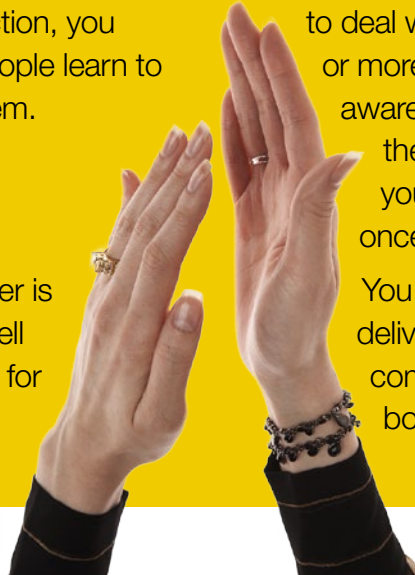
A brand's esteem comes from consistency. The longer you can retain communication consistency about what sets you apart, the higher your esteem grows in the marketplace.

Once you've established your distinction, you must deliver on it consistently. As people learn to trust the brand, it gains market esteem.

This is not an option. Consider what happens if customers have a lot of knowledge about a brand, but not enough esteem. The National Enquirer is a typical example. Consumers are well aware of the brand, but their respect for it falls short. If you claim to be easier

to deal with or faster than your competitors, or more accurate, customers will be acutely aware of that distinction. It's what draws them to your brand. Imagine then, if you don't deliver on that promise. Even once can be devastating.

You have to be so passionate about delivering on the promise that no compromise is acceptable. This requires boldness and leadership.



4 Knowledge



Finally, when the first three pillars have been built, only then can the brand seriously begin to focus on the fourth one, which is creating knowledge and awareness of the brand.

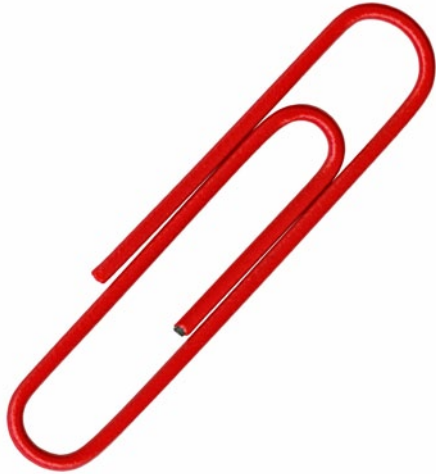
While it's possible to create awareness for a company or product through brute force efforts such as massive media campaigns, you generally can't build a brand using such tactics.

Only when all four brand pillars are applied, in the right order, can you build a brand. With the first two pillars, people will remember your message of distinction.



They'll look for consistency to see if you really do live up to the promise. That builds esteem.

FedEx started with a passion to “absolutely, positively” get it there overnight—a highly relevant message. This became the foundation for success as the company built esteem through consistency. Building knowledge was relatively easy under those conditions.



“How clear is your brand distinction? If people don’t get it, forget it.”

—George Pytlik

Keep it simple.



You need to capture and convey all the complex aspects of your brand's meaning in such a clear and concise way that people get it and can share it in just one short phrase or sentence.

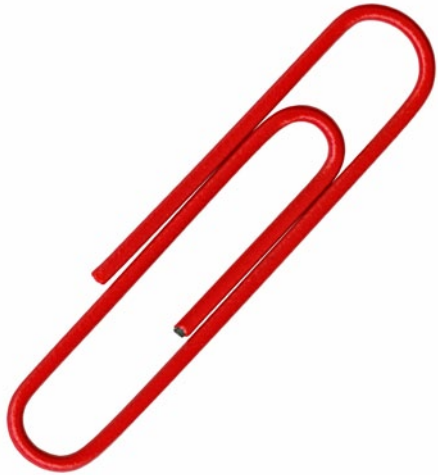
There are too many choices out there and too many messages screaming for attention. You must keep it simple. If you can't clearly explain your brand's distinctiveness in a simple way, then how can you expect customers to?

Forbes wrapped its concept in a simple phrase: Capitalist Tool. It's a message for a very specific audience and it resonates brilliantly with that audience. Staples uses "easy" as its brand



distinctiveness, focusing on making it easy for you to get your items and out of the store quickly. Their Easy Button encapsulates this idea in a very clear and simple way. Sensodyne toothpaste clearly differentiates as the product for people with sensitive teeth. It's something anyone can explain in a moment.

How simple is your brand message? Do all your staff understand and demonstrate it?



“When I hear a man preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees.”

—Abraham Lincoln

Be bold.



No brand can be built on mediocrity or an attitude of covering your bases. If you're not bold, you're nothing. Reject group thinking, committee-based strategies and analysis paralysis.

As Nike emphatically declared, "Just do it." You can't create the kind of brand distinction you need with committee-based thinking. All you end up with is a bland safe place that won't offend anyone.

This kind of group thinking won't make your brand mean anything, either. You need to boldly choose a direction and go for it.



Every successful brand involved a bold, visionary CEO or small leadership team who knew where the company needed to go and took it there without hesitation. Think Apple. Starbucks. FedEx. Purdue. Disney. Porsche. Ikea.

Do you want a legendary brand? Pick a differentiation that sets you apart, then live that distinction from the front desk to shipping. Lead strongly with boldness.

The bottom line.



Brand consistency leads directly to higher consumer loyalty and increased sales. With 97% of consumers visiting websites prior to doing business, consistency has never been more important.

A 2005 study cited by Brand Amplitude found that Ragu Spaghetti sauce enjoyed twice the market share of key competitor Prego, even though Ragu was twice the price. 38% of Ragu purchases were made by advocates who valued the brand's consistency, compared to only 15% of advocate support for Prego.

Companies with consistent branding show 20% increased brand equity over those without that



consistency. A UK study found that 9.8% of online shopping carts were abandoned because consumers felt uneasy due to inconsistency of the brand experience.

A study by Bruno Kocher at the University of Lausanne and Sandor Czellar of HEC Paris found that consistency was even more important for brands that were still in the process of building esteem in the marketplace.

Brand evaluation



You know what makes your brand distinct from key competitors

Yes No Not Sure

Your current marketing communications clearly reflects your differentiation

Yes No Not Sure

You have a written Branding Strategy document to guide all marketing communication decisions

Yes No Not Sure

Your branding is consistent across all communication programs, print and online

Yes No Not Sure

Your staff understand your distinction and feel pride in their association with your brand

Yes No Not Sure

You have a marketing program to regularly talk to all those who are interested in your brand, through Email, social media and other media

Yes No Not Sure

Your marketing tools make it easy for customers to share your brand distinction with others

Yes No Not Sure

If you answered “No” or “Not Sure” to any of these questions, contact George Pytlik for a free consultation. **Call Toll-Free 1.888.598.3595**