Designing Brand Identity

fifth edition

Alina Wheeler

with foreword by Debbie Millman

an essential guide for the whole branding team

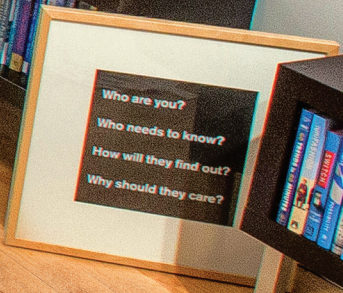# Designing Brand Identity

fifth edition

☐ **I am not a robot.**

one eye sees,

the other feels.
—PAUL KLEE

Who are you?

Who needs to know?

How will they find out?

Why should they care?

Alina Wheeler

Designing
Brand
Identity

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No one does it alone.

Books, like brands, are built over time. This book is not my book. It is our book. It is the result of an extensive collaboration with my colleagues around the world who are branding the future with intelligence, clarity, and boundless creativity. You know who you are. Thank you for sharing your time, your wisdom, and your insights.

My dream team has always risen to the challenge of working on this book. I am eternally grateful for their expertise, their patience, and their sense of humor.

Creating this global resource has been my personal Mount Everest. Love, indeed, does conquer all. My husband Eddy's energy and laughter always make the impossible possible. Tessa and Tearson are our shooting stars. Skylight is my Shangri-La.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Michael Cronan, Wally Olins, Bill Drenttel, and Sylvia Harris.

Photo: Ed Wheeler

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Contents

Designing Brand Identity is a quick reference guide. All subject matter is organized by spread for ease of access in the blinding speed of business and life. All that is needed is your desire and passion to be the best.

Basics

Part 1 presents the fundamental concepts needed to jumpstart the branding process and creates a shared vocabulary for the entire team.

Process

Part 2 presents a universal process regardless of the project's scope and nature. This section answers the question "Why does it take so long?"

Best Practices

Part 3 showcases best practices. Local and global, public and private, these projects inspire and exemplify original, flexible, lasting solutions.

Foreword by Debbie Millman

Designing Brand Identity reinvents the idea of a marketing textbook, demystifies branding, and illuminates the range of tools and techniques used by experienced practitioners. Since the first edition appeared in 2003, Alina Wheeler's book has become a singular resource providing a common language for the whole branding team.

Designing Brand Identity demonstrates the relationship between strategy and design, and showcases compelling best practice case studies from the public and private sectors, globally.

It's not surprising that the book was an immediate hit, with five updated editions over fourteen years, and translated into seven languages. It strikes a deep chord in culture, and unequivocally proves how the practice of branding engages intelligence, creativity, imagination, and emotion unlike any other business discipline.

Designing Brand Identity has become a trusted resource and road map for designers, brand consultancies, digerati, and their clients. It is rare that one book can be used by both marketing and creative. *Designing Brand Identity*

accomplishes this feat, educating and inspiring the entire branding team, regardless of one's specific role. And its reach extends beyond working professionals: it is a textbook in design and business programs across the globe.

In short, I contend that *Designing Brand Identity* has done more to illuminate the mysteries and significance of branding than any other book of our time.

You are now holding the fifth edition of *Designing Brand Identity*. Each edition has evolved with the massive changes in technology, in behavior, and in our comprehension of the role branding plays in our cognition. Wheeler's contribution to this understanding is unprecedented.

Design is intelligence made visible.

Lou Danziger

Debbie Millman is the cofounder and chair of the Masters in Branding program at SVA, training a new generation of brand leaders. As host of the podcast Design Matters, she has interviewed more than three hundred design luminaries and cultural commentators. She worked with over two hundred brands during her tenure as president of the design division of Sterling Brands from 1995 to 2016.

To mark the occasion of this new edition, I had the opportunity to explore the origins and intention of this effort with the author herself.

Why was this book needed?
I wanted to demystify branding, deconstruct the process, and give teams the tools to build trust and achieve remarkable results. While there were a lot of brilliant brand strategy books, and a lot of inspiring design books, there weren't any about a disciplined process to revitalize a brand. I had met a lot of smart leaders who were eager to understand the fundamentals and benefits of branding, and why good design was a business imperative.

What changes have you seen since the publication of the first edition?
The book underscores how far we have come. In the first edition, there were no apps or social media. Rising above the competitive clamor gets harder each day. Brand expression has exploded across all digital platforms. Content marketing has become a core competency, and armies of algorithms are at work. I've seen a dramatic increase in best practices across organizations big and small, public and private, for profit and nonprofit, driven by a new generation of agile leaders.

You've mapped a disciplined process in *Designing Brand Identity*. How has it evolved over the various editions?
My five-phase process to revitalize a brand is still the bedrock. It works. Readers from around the world share the successes their organizations have had by following the process. Reader feedback has enriched each edition and added important international perspectives.

I find that some CEOs don't know what good design is, and it's shocking. Why do you think they aren't aware of the power of design?
I am not shocked. If I looked under the hood of a Lamborghini, I would not know it's a high performance engine. If no one has ever shared best practices or case studies, how would a CEO know about the power of design? There are voluminous marketing case studies that never even include the "D" word. My aim has always been to spotlight the powerful synergy of strategy and design.

How have *you* changed since the first edition?
I have more empathy for clients. Changing anything takes a great deal of courage. Just because something is the right thing to do doesn't mean it's the easy thing to do.

Why do you think change is so hard to implement?
It's all about people. Getting people on board with change is difficult; there is always resistance. But I am optimistic: employee engagement is being embraced. A key part of my process is taking the time—up front—to build trust and agree on brand strategy, before moving on to design strategy. More participation, less persuasion.

What advice do you have for organizations embarking on revitalizing their brands?
Commit to a disciplined process. Stay customer-centric and trust the process. Engage your employees. Forge emotional connections and life long relationships with your customers. Seize every opportunity to amplify your differentiation. Be innovative, original, and dynamic. Become irreplaceable. Stay calm on the roller coaster of relentless change and keep moving.

What do you hope readers will get from this fifth edition?
The insights, courage, and tools to do the right thing for the right reasons. I want most to give readers the confidence to 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
President, Ex;it Design
Cofounder, J2 Design

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.

Brand

As competition creates infinite choices, companies look for ways to connect emotionally with customers, become irreplaceable, and create lifelong relationships. A strong brand stands out in a densely crowded marketplace. People fall in love with brands, trust 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.

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

Brands have three primary functions*

Navigation

Brands help consumers choose from a bewildering array of choices.

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.

*David Haigh, CEO, Brand Finance

VIRTUAL
GLOBAL
NATIONAL
LOCAL
PERSONAL

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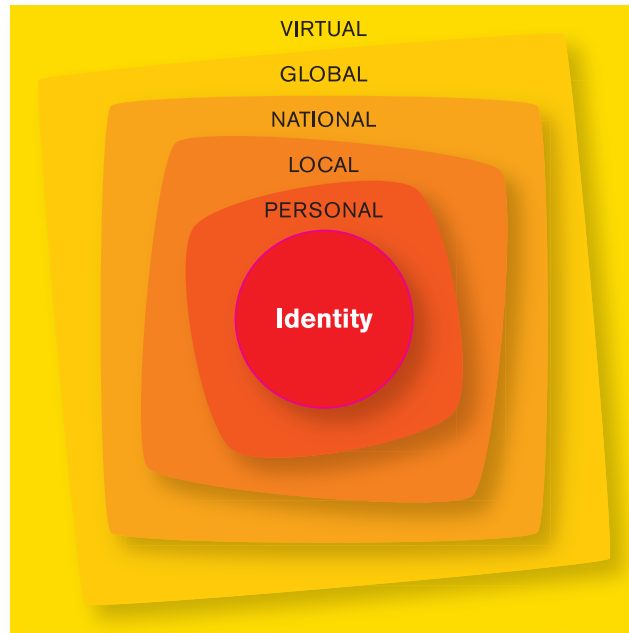
Businesses are now only as strong as their brands, and nothing else offers business leaders so much potential leverage.

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

SALES PROMOTION
SOCIAL NETWORKS
ADVERTISING
ENVIRONMENTS
EXPERIENCES
WEBSITES
NEWSLETTERS
BUSINESS FORMS
PODCASTS
PUBLIC RELATIONS
SIGNAGE
PACKAGING
DIRECT MAIL
EXHIBITS
TRADE SHOWS
PROPOSALS
WORD OF MOUTH
EMAILS
MOBILE
VOICEMAILS
VIDEO
PUBLICATIONS
PRESENTATIONS
APPS
SPEECHES
LETTERHEADS
EMPLOYEES
BUSINESS CARDS
PRODUCTS
BILLBOARDS
SERVICES
EPHEMERA
VEHICLES

Brand

Brand touchpoints
Each touchpoint is an opportunity to increase awareness and build customer loyalty.

3

Brand identity

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 everyday, but you only remember the ones you love.

Luc Speisser
Managing Director
Landor

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

Moira Cullen
VP, Global Beverage Design
PepsiCo

Laura Zindel

Target

7 Minute Workout on the Apple Watch

Bevel Shave System

4

McDonald's

vitaminwater

Pitney Bowes

Dale Carnegie

truvia

Mall of America

City of Melbourne
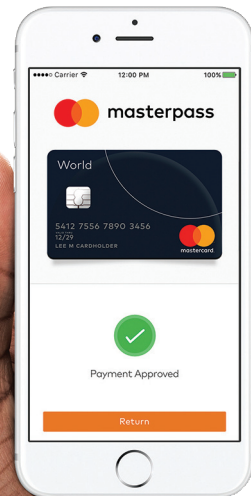
Mastercard

Branding

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 and cofounder
Masters 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.

A. G. Lafley
CEO, P&G
Business Week, 2009

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

When to start the process

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 because of a trademark conflict.

Our name has negative connotations in our new markets.

Our name misleads customers.

We merged.

We need a new name for the Chinese market.

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 face-lift.

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 governance

Brand management requires strategy, planning, and orchestration. It begins with thoughtful leadership, a shared understanding of core purpose and brand fundamentals, and an imperative to grow brand equity. It's finding new ways to delight customers, to engage employees, and to demonstrate your competitive advantage.

A strong brand binds us internally and it differentiates us externally.

Brian Resnick
Director, Global Brand & Communication Services
Deloitte

We're committed to bringing our brand to life each day, and ensuring its continued growth.

Melissa Hendricks
Vice President, Marketing Strategy
Cerner

marketing   advertising   everything else we do and say
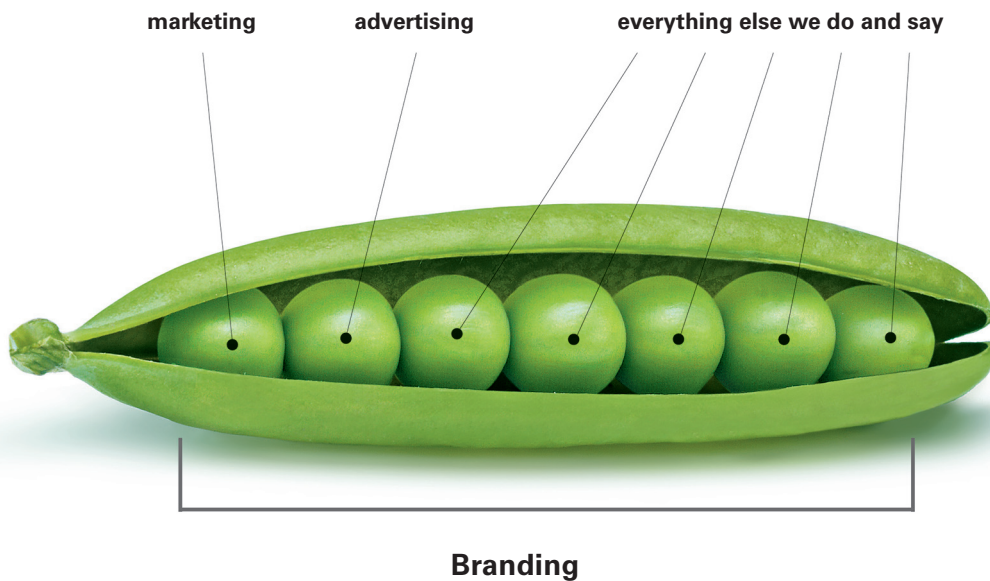
Branding

Every Spectrum Health employee, design consultant, agency, and supplier receives a copy of "One System. One Focus. One Brand." It's their "brand bible" and summarizes the organization's vision, attributes, and branding components.

Bart Crosby
President
Crosby Associates

Spectrum Health diagram: Crosby Associates

Brand stewardship principles
Developed by Gabriel Cohen, CMO, Monigle

People

Explain why the brand is important instead of telling people what to do.

Think empowerment, not enforcement.

Make it easy for your associates to be on brand.

Educate your internal audiences with workshops, videos, training modules, brand forums, and self-serve content.

Process

Keep the process flexible, agile, and responsive to change. Branding has become digital, social, and experience-based.

Get involved earlier in the creative review process instead of playing a compliance role at the back end.

Showcase best practices regularly and build an inspiration bank.

Not all brand elements have equal importance. Organize them by sacred, interpretive, and customizable.

Tools

Create a brand ambassador program to include key people who will feel a sense of ownership.

Create a user-friendly, online brand center that consolidates brand assets in one place. Streamline requests and capture data.

Tailor guidelines and content for different user groups, both internal and external.

> **Brand governance is the managed interplay of behavior, communications, design, legal compliance, process and measurement that drive brand performance across an enterprise.**
>
> Hampton Bridwell
> CEO and Managing Partner
> Tenet Partners

How brand governance has evolved

From	To
Centralized command and control	Education, empowerment, and self-service
Review approval at final stage	Strategic partner throughout the process
Rigid	Collaborative and iterative
Static PDF guidelines	Dynamic, evolving applications
General one size fits all approach	Tailored content for different user groups

The difference between branding and marketing
Developed by Matchstic

Branding	Marketing
Branding is why.	Marketing is how.
Branding is long-term.	Marketing is short-term.
Branding is macro.	Marketing is micro.
Branding defines trajectory.	Marketing defines tactics.
Branding is the reason someone buys.	Marketing is the reason someone first buys.
Branding builds loyalty.	Marketing generates response.
Branding is the being.	Marketing is the doing.