

Brand Mojo – it's all in the mix

Branding is both ubiquitous and mysterious, depending on your perspective.

Making the complex simple,
then the simple compelling

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Inside a large organisation, it's everywhere – multiple teams of people, from HR to marketing to sales, all working away, each contributing to an overall brand expression. Sometimes a well-rounded and consistent whole is the result, sometimes a fragmented hotch-potch of messages, each the proud property of a corporate silo, resulting in a flabby diluted brand.

For a start-up or a smaller company, busy getting on with the day to day challenges of building the business branding can seem at worst unnecessary, something for the big boys with budgets to burn, and at best an over-complicated concept made impenetrable by pompous priest-like consultancies, the only ones to be trusted with the 'Word'.

It doesn't have to be this way. Yes, as a word 'brand' can indeed be a dangerous thing. Difficult to define and poorly democratised, it's become attached to everything from logos to celebrities. And as a nebulous entity that relies on stories for its existence, brand itself is intangible and hard to measure. Big business accepts this but often struggles to get the mix of stories right. Smaller businesses can be wary of the term and rightly so, but then are missing out if they ignore what can be a valuable, if not the most valuable, driver of long-term success. Unlike marketing, which is a profit and loss item brand is a balance sheet item – an asset. This is because a strong brand will drive more future customer preference, premium price paid and/or loyalty compared to a weak brand or unbranded product.

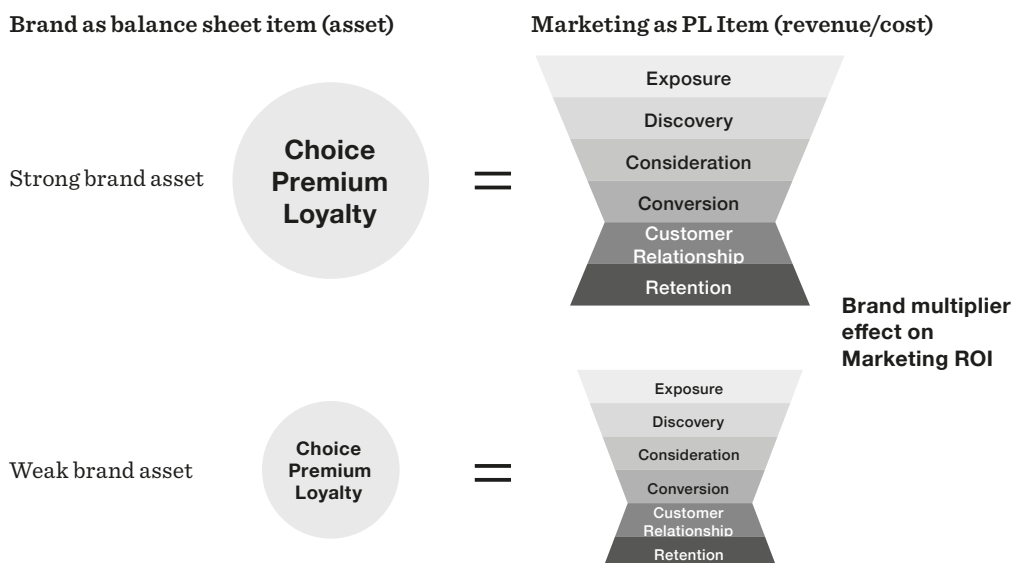
About Lloyd Northover

Since 1975 we've created some of the world's best-known identities and brand change programmes.

Today we believe for lasting change, your brand and culture need to work together like never before. That's why we help our clients – from major FTSE listed companies and global brands to education and public-sector organisations – with leading edge strategy consultancy, design and activation in brand design and culture change.

We do this by making the complex simple, then the simple compelling. Check out lloydnorthover.com

Relationship between branding and marketing





So, the brand as an asset is a ‘multiplier’. This word gives the real clue to the hidden power of brand for any business, large or small. A company’s value is a combination of earnings and multiple (for future earnings), so the strength of a brand impacts the multiple that is calculated in a company valuation as much as it impacts immediate earnings. In a nutshell, it acts like IP (Intellectual Property), building the long-term value of a company. But how do businesses know if they have a strong brand? Enter the new thinking – ‘brand mojo’, an accessible approach that places as much emphasis on the mix and recipe as it does the ingredients.

We are all familiar with the marketing mix. But what about the brand mix? It’s not the product or service; this is irrelevant without the brand behind it. Unfocused product development gets you Colgate frozen ready meals, Bic disposable knickers and Smith and Wesson mountain bikes. It’s not marketing; no amount of budget and multi-channel exposure will get people to repeatedly buy something without a believable and defensible brand story. Dasani, and Sunny Delight, both of whom should have known better, found this out the hard way. It’s not culture; the coolest people in world won’t encourage brand loyalty if the product experience is not good enough or poorly targeted.

But the perfect blend of all three? Bringing together the people and values of a business, the product, services and experiences on offer or in development, and the marketing strategy and tactics will help define and develop the right brand positioning, strategy and expression (from design identity to team behavior). Get these both individually right and collectively aligned and you have the magic that gives a brand its mojo.





Large corporates have plenty of in-house experts and large consultancies that advise, develop, measure and invest in their brand and its value. But their size prescribes natural silos which don't always align well if the overlaps are poorly understood. For small businesses the challenge is accessing affordable quality branding advice on how to develop their brand as an asset.

Whether large or small, a strong brand can be identified, developed and sustained by getting the specific brand mix right for every individual business. This is not treating the brand as a logo or identity. The brand mix is the product and experience, the marketing and, critically, the culture of the business and how these elements interrelate.

Culture is one of the strongest drivers of brand and perhaps the most underrated. 'The way we do things around here' is your brand story and your leadership, clarity and consistency over time, while employee brand engagement deserves far more attention than its current Cinderella status in most companies. And company culture is changing just as the world is changing. In our contemporary flexi-gig economy, where employees often work away from the osmotic influence of the traditional workplace it's crucial that culture is both clear and assimilative. A brand's people make its stories but only if they know how to tell them.

Between culture, marketing and product there are myriad brand analysis tools and models, from onions to houses to funnels, often with a jaunty TM and hefty price tag attached. Using separate models for the different elements of the mix creates barriers, blocking a holistic overview of the brand, the one thing needed to make the outputs from these tools tangible. Bringing it all together can use a combination of techniques, but to create a compelling brand, bring it all together you must – with our clients we populate a single 'brand purpose' model for positioning, summarizing all of our brand research and analysis in one place. One model, one sheet of paper, one simple solution from which a strategy can be extrapolated for every element of the brand mojo mix. There are many solutions, but whatever techniques are used, a rigorous, well researched and well executed approach that follows this philosophy can unlock the true growth potential of any brand.

To succeed at finding brand mojo, it's critical that brand, marketing, HR and senior leadership in larger businesses work as one team and not in siloes. For smaller businesses, the founder, owner or leader should drive the approach with support where available. Big companies and consultancies often surround the brand development process with mystique and impenetrable jargon. It's not necessary. Demystifying the branding process does not dilute the magic. It makes it easier to find and to harness.

A brand can make or break a business (most businesses know this but many still don't act on it). Breaking down barriers to find a brand's mojo can transform a business. Whether those barriers are silos or opacity, whether working with consultants, through training or by doing it themselves, taking a brand mojo approach will help ambitious companies plan, codify and grow their business with more confidence. Get the mix right and they'll find, build and sustain their mojo.



Simon Ward is CEO of Lloyd Northover, a brand consultancy in the MSQ Partners Group, and guest lecturer at Warwick Business School.



Sarah Wade is Strategy Director at Lloyd Northover, a brand consultancy in the MSQ Partners Group, and a training expert in brand language (writing, tone and style).