

It's Brand, All The Way Down



Official Mfg. Co.

Jan 30, 2018 · 4 min read

In our world of branding and design, most communication is primarily visual. While this may seem superficial to many outside of this world, we at OMFGCO do our darndest to put real thought into our designs. So for 2018, we have queued up a monthly series called *Every Decision is a Brand Decision*. This is the first post in that series.

Why? We wanted to be able to share our process in a different way—using words as well as pictures—in an attempt to answer the “why” at the heart of the brands we work with and admire.

In this series, we'll explore why brands are more than a logo (and are more than a means of visual communication in general), why stewarding a brand continues to grow more and more important, and why you have a brand even if you don't think you do. We'll also share our thoughts about how company culture — a.k.a. how you treat people and operate your business — is an essential (if not *most* essential) part of your brand.

But the main premise of our series is that a strong brand isn't something that is created after a company makes a bunch of great decisions and gets big and becomes great at what it does — a strong brand begins with the end in mind. When a clear, strong brand is established up front, that clarity goes on to guide all the business decisions that follow.

You are making brand decisions, all the way down.”





“Marketing tests have shown that this logo greatly reduces customer dissatisfaction.”

From Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*:

“A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: ‘What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.’ The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, ‘What is the tortoise

standing on?’ ‘You’re very clever, young man, very clever,” said the old lady. ‘But it’s turtles all the way down!’ “

This allegory holds true for good branding. A good, memorable brand really is “brand all the way down.” You start with brand, and you end with brand.

In this way, a good brand starts as a business’ solid foundation. If what you’re doing isn’t solid to begin with, each subsequent layer of business built on that foundation is doomed.

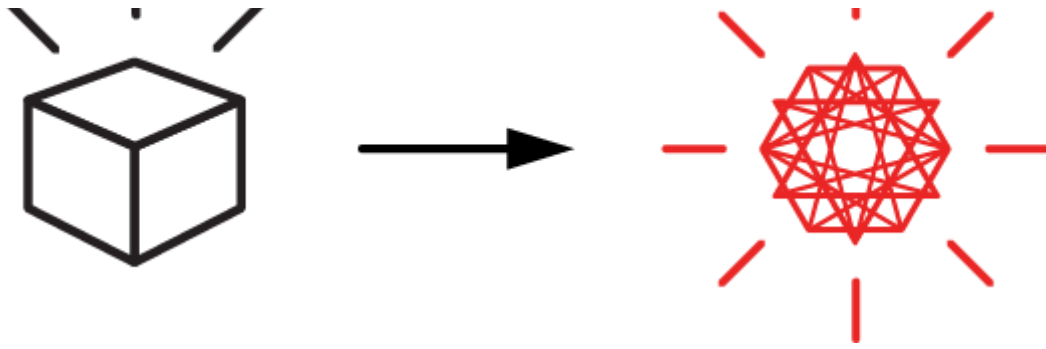
We have met plenty of folks who think a brand is merely a decoration or a distraction technique. The opposite is true: your brand is the very essence of what you offer. Your job is to create clear brand standards for yourself, share them and then live up to those standards, if not exceed them. Then, your audience — not you — gets to decide if you are truly authentic or not.

Imagine this scenario: a conference room full of business people who have recently come to the realization that, “Shit, our customers are pissed at us for (fill in the blank)! We gotta figure out how to change that.”

Easier said than done. Companies, especially successful ones, tend to loathe change. It’s understandable — they worry that messing with the formula will affect the bottom line. However, if consumers already know a brand for its negative reputation (i.e. mistreating its consumers, polluting the environment, overcharging for a cheap product, etc.), it’s really hard to change that perception. And it’s almost always expensive, in both time and money.

In desperation, they ask themselves, “Well, what *can* we change cheaply?” The unfortunate logical conclusion is often, “Let’s change the logo!”





New logos are rarely better logos and they almost never solve the problem at hand.

Too many brands lack guidance, especially from those who know them best. Decisions are often made by people who don't understand (or care) what is "on brand." Worse yet is when those people don't understand that the decision, whatever it is, needs to speak to the brand standards. This situation compounded over time gets businesses to the desperate spot where they try to fix the logo to fix the problem. Warren Buffett said it best: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and 5 minutes to ruin it."

Now more than ever, no matter what you are doing, the brand is the *story*. Customers aren't buying your product or service at face value (and truthfully, they never were), they are buying the *feeling that they get* from your product or service and how much they align with it. And don't forget, the feeling that they get doesn't just come from your product or service — it's also the feeling they get from giving you their money.

We believe that **Every Decision is a Brand Decision**. In future posts, we'll explore what we think creates a strong brand, how to shape it, and how to live up to your brand every day. Thanks for reading, and we'd love to hear from you.

Get the Medium app

