

Laura Busche

LEAN BRANDING

Creating Dynamic Brands
to Generate Conversion

Lean Branding: Creating Dynamic Brands to Generate Conversion

Laura Busche



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Praise for *Lean Branding*

*“If you’ve got a product and your thoughts about branding are ‘I don’t even know where to start’ —read *Lean Branding*. Laura Busche’s book lays out for you what you need to do, why it matters, and how to do it quickly and easily. You’ll have a brand as great as your product in no time.”*

—Cindy Alvarez—Director of User Experience, Yammer (a Microsoft company), author of *Lean Customer Development*

*“Establishing a brand for a startup or small enterprise in today’s marketplace is more important than ever. *Lean Branding* is a practical, insightful guide that will quickly prove its worth in an often-overlooked area that is fundamental to the success of every business. It should be in every entrepreneur’s toolkit.”*

—Roy Thomasson—Founder and Chair, Board of Directors, Young Americas Business Trust, Washington, DC

“If you want your startup to fail then ignore this book. Branding has always been a soft skill. Laura makes it a hard science.”

—Bronson Taylor—Cofounder, Growth Hacker TV

*“As editor of *Smashing Magazine*, I have had several opportunities to work with Laura and her writing is always flawless. However, the writing is always approachable; as if she is standing in front of you explaining things to you. In her own words: ‘I decided to take a look at brands from three different lenses: business, design, and psychology.’ And this is what makes this book unique: a combination of her personal writing style and looking at branding from a larger scope and perspective. As a design educator, this is a book I would definitely like to use in my design classes.”*

—Alma Hoffmann—Assistant Professor, University of South Alabama, Editor of the Design section at *Smashing Magazine*

*“*Lean Branding* is a book that anyone concerned with their brand —startups, small businesses, marketers—should have in their library and refer to over and over again. Laura Busche guides you through the ins-and-outs of creating a brand and she includes some amazing worksheets and tools for all aspects of the process of the brand creation lifecycle. I can’t wait to get this for all my startup clients.”*

—Erin Malone—Partner, Tangible UX, LLC

*“An intuitive step-by-step guide to developing and promoting your company or startup’s brand. Easy to follow and implement, *Lean Branding* manages to discuss topics such as marketing with sincerity and integrity.”*

—Carmen Medina—Rebels at Work.com

“Laura Busche has written a deeply insightful book that offers readers a pragmatic approach for turning a ‘bunch of features’ into branded products that customers buy. Branding is not something that comes easily to engineers, but Laura’s book makes the topic approachable.”

—Kelly Goetsch—Director, Product Management, Oracle, O'Reilly author

“I’m a technologist, not a brand manager...well, until now. Lean Branding changed everything I thought about branding, and gave me exactly the tools I needed to develop and execute the brands for my startups.”

—Eric Freeman—PhD, cofounder WickedlySmart, O'Reilly author and former CTO, Disney Online

Foreword

When new startup teams begin learning the Lean Startup methodology, they often ask me when the period of experimentation will end so they can start building the “real product.” I have to break it to them that there’s no such thing as the final product—every product launch is an opportunity to discover how to better delight the customer. The “Build-Measure-Learn” process begins when we ask what we are hoping to discover about our customer or our strategy—and it should continue long after our first product launch.

At the core of *Lean Branding* is the idea that just as products are never truly finished, brands, too, must be committed to adaption and evolution. Companies cannot afford to let their brands stagnate or think of them as a “set of features,” argues Laura Busche. Instead, they must build chameleon brands that “adapt to consumer’s ever-changing needs and desires” by putting their assumptions to the test and using what they’ve learned to iterate and adapt.

This is easier said than done.

I’ve worked with “builders” from many different sectors. Even if the materials they work with are very different—some write code, others build healthcare devices or heavy industrial equipment, still others design user experiences—what they share is a desire to use their expertise to build “high-quality” products to present to customers. But the Lean Startup methodology challenges us to rethink the notion of quality. The Build-Measure-Learn loop is a way to overcome the very human tendency to over-engineer solutions before we’ve tested whether our “solution” has anything to do with a real customer problem.

Busche also discusses the importance of measuring the right things. The metrics-obsessed among us can get very excited by any sign that we’re getting some traction—but it’s important to distinguish between “vanity

metrics” (the ones that look good on paper but tell us nothing about our potential for growth) and “actionable metrics” (data we can learn from and use to further the process of experimentation and iteration).

In the section on Measurement, Busche provides some useful examples of the metrics that matter—the ones that are connected to the way our businesses make money or grow our customer base. Only by changing customer behavior in some way—whether customers make a purchase, sign up for a newsletter, agree to share their time or make some other exchange of value—can we be sure that our experiments were a success. This process of experimentation and measuring what our customers value is also a way to foster deep relationships over time—the hallmark of successful brand development and a great way, I’d argue, to deliver products and services that deserve the title “high-quality.”

Eric Ries

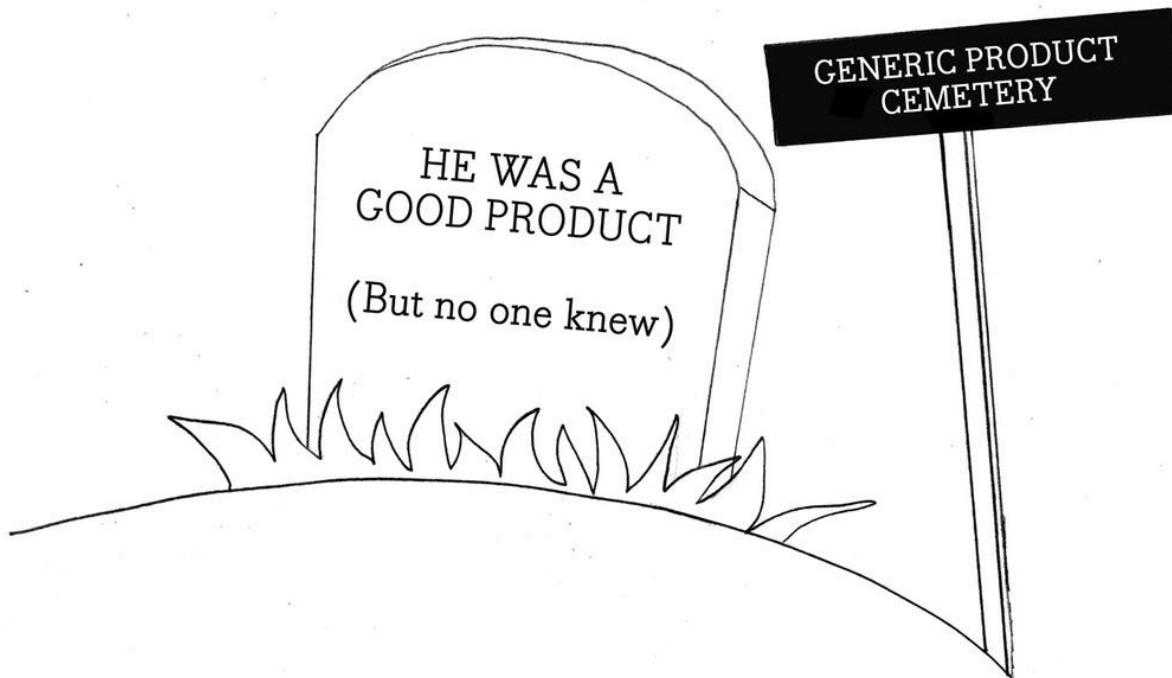
San Francisco, CA

September 3, 2014

Preface

Why I Wrote This Book

I've had it. I can't stand to see another killer product ignored by the press, investors, and customers because its founders had no clue about branding. Because they didn't have the time, resources, and knowledge to turn the right heads around, at the right time. Maybe that product is an app, a service, a combination of both...maybe that product is *you!*



Good products shouldn't have to die because we failed to send their message across.

Branding Today

To say that Lean Branding is an important skill in this chaotic marketplace of

ours is a *massive* understatement. Barriers to entry are as low as ever, competition is fierce, and everyone I know has a severe inbox problem. People's attention has never been this divided, their demands as sophisticated, or their access to information as easy.

If building a disruptive, dynamic brand is not in your plans, neither is profit.

That being said, here's the killer tool that I've been preparing for you:

A DIY branding guide for startups that hate waste and love customers

A brand is your impression in consumers' minds, and the strategy with which you build it together. Your brand doesn't compete with product: it *is* the product, *and* its price, *and* the first business card that I get from you, your *ultralight, superfast interface...and* the (hopefully) soothing voice of whoever takes your customer service calls. Whether you're creating a new product, a new service, or a *new you*, or you're just looking for inspiration, this book is here to guide you into turning outsiders into customers with a high-conversion brand.

Early-stage, unfunded startups can't afford to hire multimillion-dollar agencies. This toolkit is here to tell you *that's OK*. Actually, it's more than OK. It will allow you to embark on a fascinating journey: an expedition to find which combination of brand symbols, story, and strategy gets you the customer traction that your product needs.

Lean Branding sheds light on the traditionally obscure process of brand development, showing you how to create, communicate, and sell a meaningful brand by measuring its performance continuously. With over 100 DIY branding tactics and inspiring case studies, *these* are tools you need under your belt.

It's a branded world, after all.

Newsflash: nobody buys "a bunch of features." People buy from *meaningful* brands that help them go from point A to point B in their life. *Propulsive* brands. And that, my friends, is the very reason why you bought this book. So let's get to work. Your high-conversion brand is officially in the making.

Who This Book Is For

I'll be honest: I believe that many of the world's problems could be solved if those who actually know how to solve them spent more time sharing and less time making their knowledge sound like nonsense. It's hard to learn about great branding when even the best branding practitioners make it seem mysterious. I wish all the best to my colleagues, but *Lean Branding* is no such book. If you're also sick of hearing fuzzy terms and useless acronyms and would like to understand how to build a dynamic brand that gets, keeps, and grows customers: welcome, I've been expecting you for months!

At this point you probably have an idea that keeps you up at night: coding, writing, planning, hustling...putting in the extra hour (or eight). I've been there: I've been the sleep-deprived, passionate dreamer wanting to put a product in everyone's hands. I've also been there for others like us: for the last two years, I've been a mentor in the Colombian government's Apps.co program. I looked more than 300 entrepreneurs in the eye as we built brands for their 90+ startups. Let me tell you something: those eyes were full of the passion required to disrupt this world.

If only the world knew them.

Maybe you're reading this and thinking, "If only they knew me!" Has it ever crossed your mind that you could be your own agency? What if I told you that there is a way for you to start building a powerful brand today? The type of brand that opens hearts and wallets. A type of brand that also iterates, learns from customers, and offers ever-evolving shortcuts to their self-realization.

As a marketing consultant, I'm approached by people expecting to find a magic phrase that will absolutely, positively, *for sure* guarantee success. Let me address this straightaway: that is *not* what I do for a living. I do not have special powers,^[1] and brand development is not witchcraft. Brand development is (or should be) an evidence-based process where you deduce a combination of symbols, story, and strategy that will represent your offer in an increasingly chaotic marketplace.

(Please slowly repeat that word to yourself: *chaotic*.)

But I can't blame you. We marketers have kept brand development strategies a secret for too long, and, as much as I'd like to tell you that there's a simple checklist behind the whole process, that's just not true. We're also obsessed with saying that brand development takes forever. I learned the hard way that this is not how startups roll.

What would you do if you only had eight weeks to go from zero to saleable brand? This is the challenge that I faced with over 90 startups between 2012 and 2014. *Lean Branding* contains the lessons I learned along the way. Fast forward: it *can* be done.

Lean Branding is a guide for fast-growth companies and the teams that build them. It introduces concepts that are familiar to brand managers and chief marketing officers, in a way that does not intimidate product managers, developers, or cofounders—no matter what their background is. If you are building a brand, no matter what your business card says, this book is for you.

What's Inside This Book

Lean Branding is your “Phone-a-Friend” lifeline. This book is here to help you wrap that killer product you’re building with a robust yet flexible DIY branding strategy that gets you traction. Please know that this is not something you get over with...ever. As long as your company is alive, so is your brand. And as a living being, it breathes, eats, reproduces, and gets haircuts. *Lean Branding* is here to show you how to make these important decisions:

- You'll find step-by-step instructions to build and measure 25 essential brand strategy ingredients, including:
 - Name
 - Typography and imagery
 - Landing page

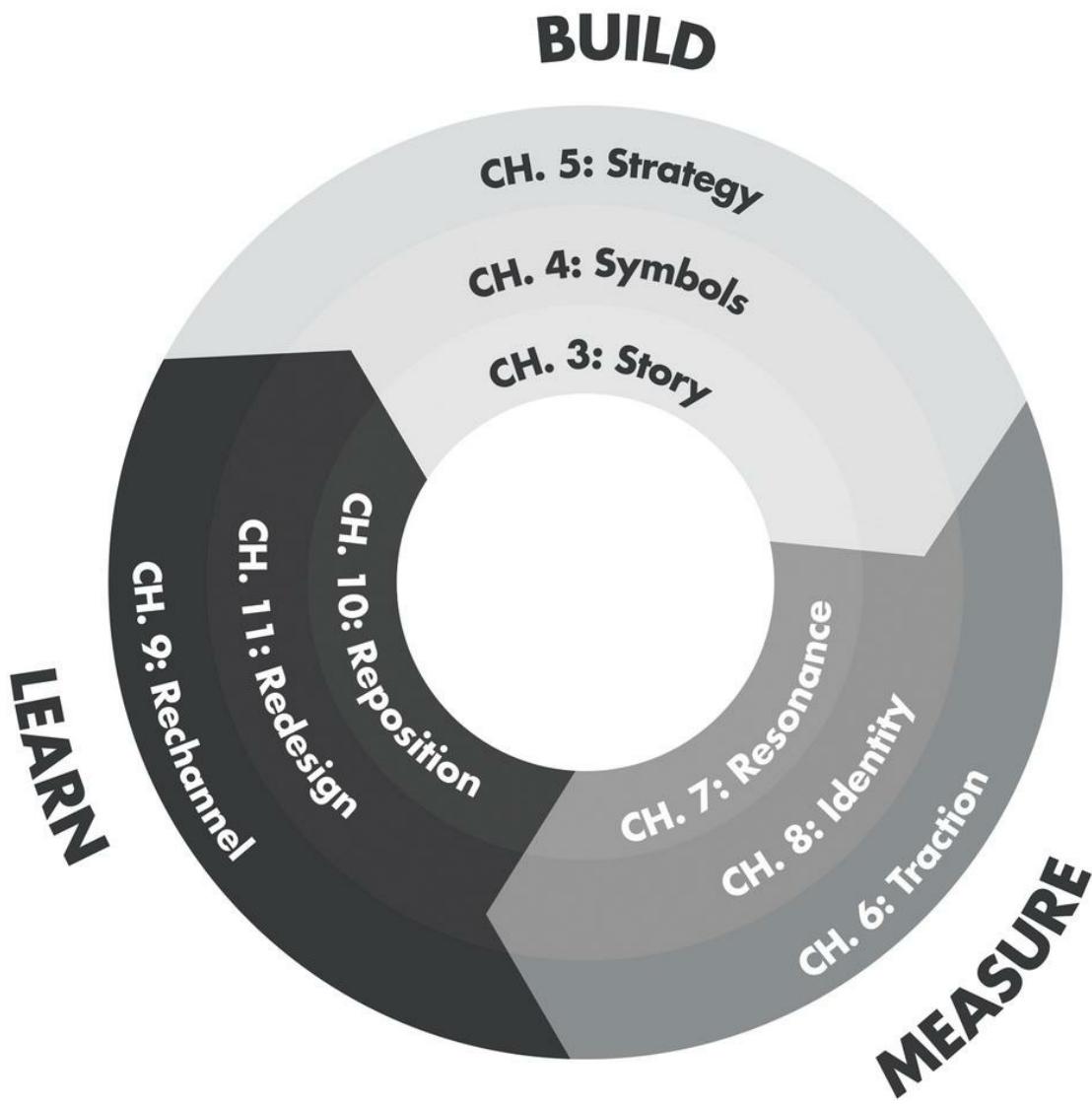
- Social media
 - Email lists
 - Press releases
 - Promotional videos
 - Blogging
 - Collateral
 - Slide decks
 - Many more
- This book contains 100+ DIY branding tactics and inspiring case studies to boost your brand with limited time and resources.
 - Branding on steroids: you will learn the secrets to hack growth with storytelling and make your product/service catch on fast—from a brand-appropriate standpoint. Traction will come, but not at the expense of identity loss.
 - Design and business are married. You'll learn to embrace this fact and put it to work for you in **Chapter 4**, when we create your brand's visual symbols step by step.
 - *Lean Branding* is packed with graphics, templates, cheatsheets, and tutorials to help you get, keep, and grow customers—minus the fuzzy jargon.
 - No nonsense, no obscure acronyms, no secrets. We're hacking our way through this crazy marketplace (and I'm on your team).
 - I am, first and foremost, a business mind. I was then drawn to marketing, *then* psychology, and only *then* design. I operate in that order. Every

single line in this book goes in the direction of getting, keeping, or growing customers. This book isn't here to make you look pretty (though you probably will).

How to Navigate This Book

There is a method to the madness. *Great branding execution doesn't come out of wizardry books, but if you focus enough, it will come out of customer interaction, a coherent action plan, and constant measurement.* *Lean Branding* is such an action plan, and in case you're wondering, it does include checklists.

We'll be working from the inside out and around the *build-measure-loop* cycle. [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#) outline what will be our action plan, and [Chapter 3](#) is where the actual building begins. [Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 4](#), and [Chapter 5](#) feature step-by-step instructions for creating the 25+ ingredients of your brand story, symbols, and strategy. [Chapter 6](#), [Chapter 7](#), and [Chapter 8](#) cover how to measure if they actually trigger *conversion*—that is, take visitors down an action path that you've created for them (e.g., buying from you or subscribing to your updates). Finally, [Chapter 9](#), [Chapter 10](#), and [Chapter 11](#) will show you how to iterate: redesigning, repositioning, and rechanneling whenever necessary.



However, there are at least three other ways in which you can navigate through *Lean Branding*:

You can concentrate on a specific part, out of the following three: brand story, brand symbols, or brand strategy.

This allows you to see how every brand ingredient in those areas evolves from a build to a learn phase. In this case, if you wanted to read the brand story part of this book, you would proceed with **Chapter 3, Chapter 7, and Chapter 10** (in the same ring).

You can select a specific brand ingredient, out of the 25 discussed throughout the book, and follow it throughout the build, measure, and learn stages.

You would choose, for example, the “brand name” component (which is included in the brand story ring) and proceed to read the brand name sections in [Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 7](#), and [Chapter 10](#). Similarly, you could select the “social media marketing” component (included in the brand strategy ring) and read the social media marketing sections in [Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#), and [Chapter 9](#).

You can choose to start on [Chapter 6](#) if you have already built your brand’s initial value creation story, visual symbols, and growth strategy.

This way you would begin at the measurement stage, testing how effectively each of those components generates conversion.

Why You Should Read This Book from Cover to Cover However You Want

Being unable to hire an agency can be oddly enlightening. Interviewing over 90 startups following the *Lean Startup* approach, I realized that having no intermediary between product development and brand creation resulted in surprisingly genuine insights. Brand development, of course, goes well beyond simple insights. And that's where I believe agencies truly add value: execution. *Lean Branding* is here to give you the tools to become an execution *rock star*.

On that train of thought, I understand rock stars don't necessarily read 250 pages from 1 to 250. And that's OK. Please make sure that you read [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#) before diving into the topics you're most interested in. Also remember that *Lean Branding* involves a *Build-Measure-Learn loop*, meaning this is not the kind of book you put on the back of a shelf.

This is *bedside table* material.

Look out for *Lean Branding Cases*: short case studies where you get to see how others have succeeded at creating lean brands. Also make sure that you read the "Dig Deeper," "Get on It," and "Branding on Steroids" sidebars to get an idea of how the topics affect the bottom line and how to act on them immediately.

I've tried to strip away all of the marketing lingo so that you can focus on the action, but there's a list of terms at the end of this book in case you do see any fancy words. Visit www.leanbranding.com for more book features, news, videos, and inspiration. If any of the quotes in this book can help someone you know, share them by tagging @leanbranding (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Google+). Finally, if you get stuck, feel free to ask anything @leanbranding (Twitter). And yes, *rants are OK*, too.

You can build a brand without wasting time and money. You can measure to see if it converts. You can learn and change what doesn't. You can hack its growth. You can do this.

(Gavel hits the base.)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "L" and "a" being particularly prominent.

September 2014

We'd Like to Hear from You

Please address comments and questions concerning this book to the publisher:

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Acknowledgments

Two years ago I set out to write the book that I would love to read.

Little did I know that books are not written by capable *individuals*, but by talented *teams*. What you are now holding is the result of countless workshops, interviews, and brainstorming sessions. Through it all, I was fortunate enough to be surrounded (and often encouraged) by exceptional institutions, colleagues, and friends.

I'd like to thank:

The supportive editorial staff at O'Reilly Media, specifically Mary Treseler and Amy Jollymore, for their invaluable input;

The inspiring faculty at American University's Kogod School of Business, the Savannah College of Art and Design, and Universidad del Norte, who taught me everything I know about business, design, psychology, and how they intersect;

My amazing colleagues and startup teams at Apps.co and the IT Ministry of Colombia, whose revolutionary entrepreneurship program is making waves in Latin America and beyond;

IT Minister Diego Molano and President Santos, for being brave enough to launch the above-mentioned revolution;

Colciencias—Colombia's Administrative Department for Innovation, Science, and Technology—for sponsoring my doctoral studies and research projects, which have added a much-needed psychological perspective to this book;

My incomparable family and friends, without whom I'd probably be sick, depressed, and/or underfed at this point;

God. Always, everywhere, and for everything.

[1] I must admit, though, that I am working hard on these two: "When you start to develop your powers of empathy and imagination, the whole world opens up to you." —Susan Sarandon

Part I. Introduction

Chapter 1. What Is a Brand?

Any damn fool can put on a deal, but it takes genius, faith, and perseverance to create a brand.

—David Ogilvy

I've been there. You just came up with the ultimate product idea—and there's a 99.9% chance that it will change the world as we know it.

You can't sleep. You build, and build, and *build*. You eat. Then you build some more.

Then it suddenly hits you: how's this "thing" that you're building going to change the world? Better yet, what is the name of this "thing"? At this point, you're so passionate about it you'd probably wear a t-shirt. What would be on that t-shirt anyway? What is your unique message to the world? Do you have one? What symbols stand strong behind that message?

We'll dive into all of these questions in this chapter, which will cover how to think strategically about brands and a few central concepts in Lean Branding theory.

There's good news and bad news. The good news is you not only can, but you *must*, use a lifeline: go ahead and ask the audience. The bad news is you need to wrap up an early version of your product, stop working, and go outside *right now*. Your marathon will have to wait until you figure out if this "thing" you're building has a place in the world. Don't get too comfortable when you find it; "Is that your final answer?" questions are *irrelevant* in this game. This game is about constantly retesting your answers, coming up with new questions, and using lifelines as much as you can.

Defining Brand

A brand is the *unique story* that consumers recall when they think of you.

This story associates your product with their *personal* stories, a particular *personality*, what you *promise* to solve, and your *position* relative to your competitors. Your brand is represented by your visual *symbols* and feeds from multiple conversations where you must participate *strategically*.

As you can imagine, this story is written and rewritten every time consumers interact with everything related to your offer:

- Your name
- Your pitch
- Your employees
- Your interface
- Your point of purchase
- Your email signature
- (Pretty much everything else you can think of)

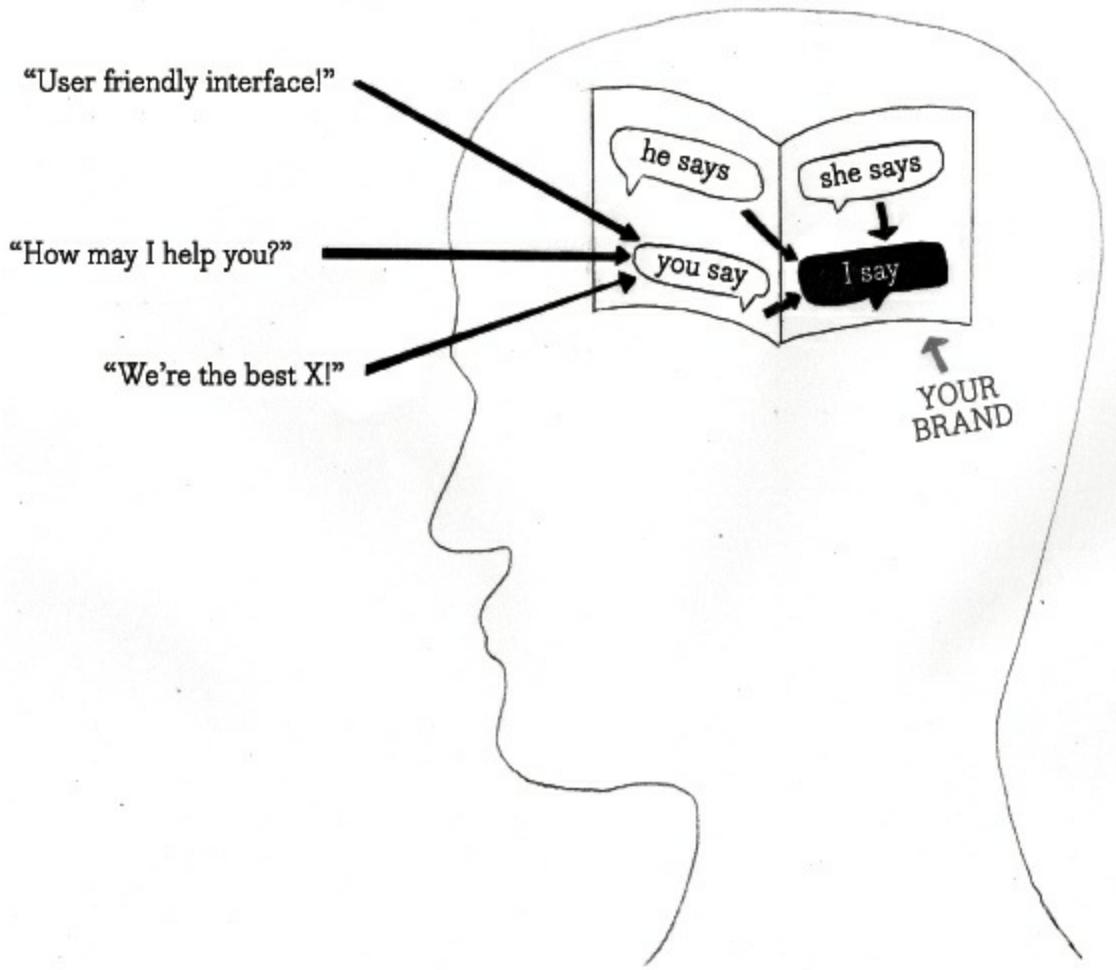
The ball is in their court. Consumers nowadays don't just listen: they love talking back. They don't just consume; they cocreate. You don't get to dictate the terms of how they experience your brand. Nobody's sitting around waiting for you to tell "your story"; instead, consumers are creating their own based on a snowballing amount of voices. I wrote this book to encourage you to enter this conversation—and to give you the tools to do it successfully.

A simple way to understand why branding is *crucial* for business is thinking about your name. Is it fair to say that "you" and "your product" are two completely unrelated items? Or "you" and your personality? How about "you" and your ancestry? Take this as far as you like: your thoughts, the way you look, or your education. The bottom line is:

Everything and everyone represents at least one brand.

Therefore:

To brand or not to brand is not even a question.



Aren't we all complex, multifaceted beings under a single name? Isn't that name how other people remember and recognize us? What are you doing *today* to make that name mean something that others remember and buy?

A Closer Look at Lean Branding

Lean principles have changed how we create, sustain, and recreate brands. There's no time to rest on our laurels when consumers are doing everything but that. They, as a matter of fact, have become *unbelievably* savvy about brands that work and those that don't. Consumers can pick up sketchy brands from miles away—and thanks to the Internet, thousands of miles away.

The Business Model Canvas and the *build-measure-learn* loop described by Eric Ries in *The Lean Startup* (Crown Business) are game-changing tools that

have undoubtedly made an impact in the way we build and sustain startups. But, after working with over 300 entrepreneurs in the implementation of this model, I realized that those who went on to perform successfully in demo days, investor meetings, and client acquisition were those who had managed to build dynamic brands. These brands generated traction and interest and positioned themselves more effectively in consumers' minds. (Let me make a quick point here: *brands are not logos*. Please stop thinking that; it'll *ruin* you. Read [Chapter 2](#).) I saw dozens of startups lose opportunities to others with simpler MVPs (minimum viable products) but a deeper sense of what their brand meant.

While losing out to a startup with a simpler MVP might seem unfair, let me tell you why it's not.

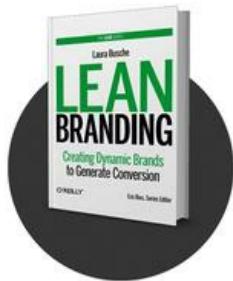
Brand creation should not be a background process for startups. It's not voodoo, it doesn't happen randomly, and it's definitely not something you put together the night before. Branding is not just about fancy graphics on your landing page. A strong brand, or lack thereof, could make or break you.

In today's saturated marketplace, you'll go nowhere selling a "bunch of features."

We are in the business of disrupting the market with brands that matter.

In today's
SATURATED MARKETPLACE
you'll go nowhere selling
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DISRUPTING THE MARKET
with brands that matter.



A Little Lean Branding Theory, or Why Chameleons > Dinosaurs

For years, we thought that customers' ideas of who they were/wanted to be (self-concepts) were pretty static. A piece of brick. So we created huge dinosaur brands to satisfy them. Today we know that a stiff, sedentary brand can't satisfy customers beyond a very short period of time. Here's a word on dinosaurs: they're extinct. Gone. Couldn't handle evolution. Similarly, thick-skinned brand certainty just doesn't work anymore.

Take a minute to come up with a one-sentence summary of who you are today and write it down: "professional rock climber," "crazy person," "working parent"—whatever it is you are (or think you are). Now consider what a 5-year-old you would've answered, and write a second descriptive phrase: "crayola lover," "recess specialist," "full-time napper."

Now please imagine these phrases, plus a picture of a younger, toothless you, on your LinkedIn profile *today*.

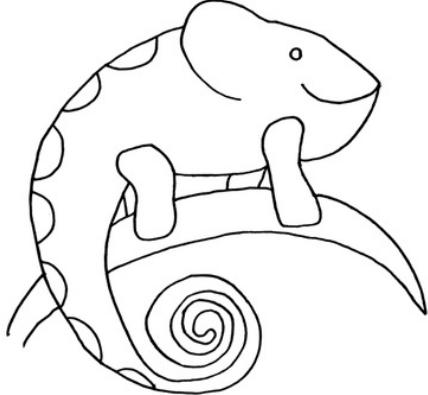
This obviously doesn't work. If everything's going the way it's supposed to, you've evolved from the time you were five. Five-year-old me dressed up as a unicorn for Halloween. It's safe to say I've changed. And so have you. And so should brands.

The point here is that we've realized that consumers constantly and proactively change their hopes, fears, and aspirations (something psychologists like Markus and Wurf^[2] have called "working self concept") in response to everything around them. We realized that we no longer see ourselves as astronauts soaring through the universe, as our 5-year-old selves did. We realized that's OK.

Every day, consumers are activating new (*possible*)^[3] self-concepts that affect the way they decide what to do and buy. I want to be my "competent-mom self," so I buy maternity books. I want to be my "summa-cum-laude self," so I pull all-nighters at the library. I want to be my "hell-of-a-designer self," so I buy top-of-the-line software, and mobile apps, and books, and cloud space, and whatever else brands like Adobe are selling these days.

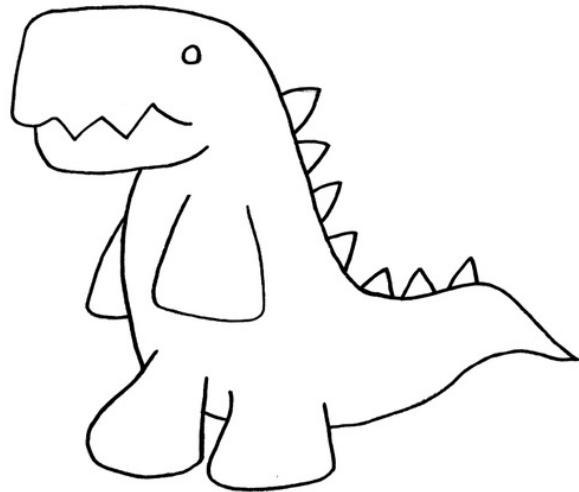
Lean Branding is about building chameleon brands, which are brands that adapt to consumer's ever-changing needs and desires. There's no use in standing still in the marketplace when consumers' ideas of themselves are

changing all over the place. Brands today are better off listening to these changes and learning from them. Lean brands have conversations, not monologues. They embrace the fact that their mission is to help consumers get closer to who they want to be. They're comfortable with the fact that this “who they want to be” is always evolving. So they evolve, too: iterating continuously in endless cycles of *building, measuring, and learning*. Hence, the three sections of this book.



CHAMELEON BRAND

- Tests assumptions & adapts
- Lean, willing to innovate
- Agile, moving around is natural
- Camouflage to survive



DINOSAUR BRAND

- Know-it-all
- Bloated, big fan of tradition
- Slow reactions, too heavy to move
- Scare off everyone else to survive

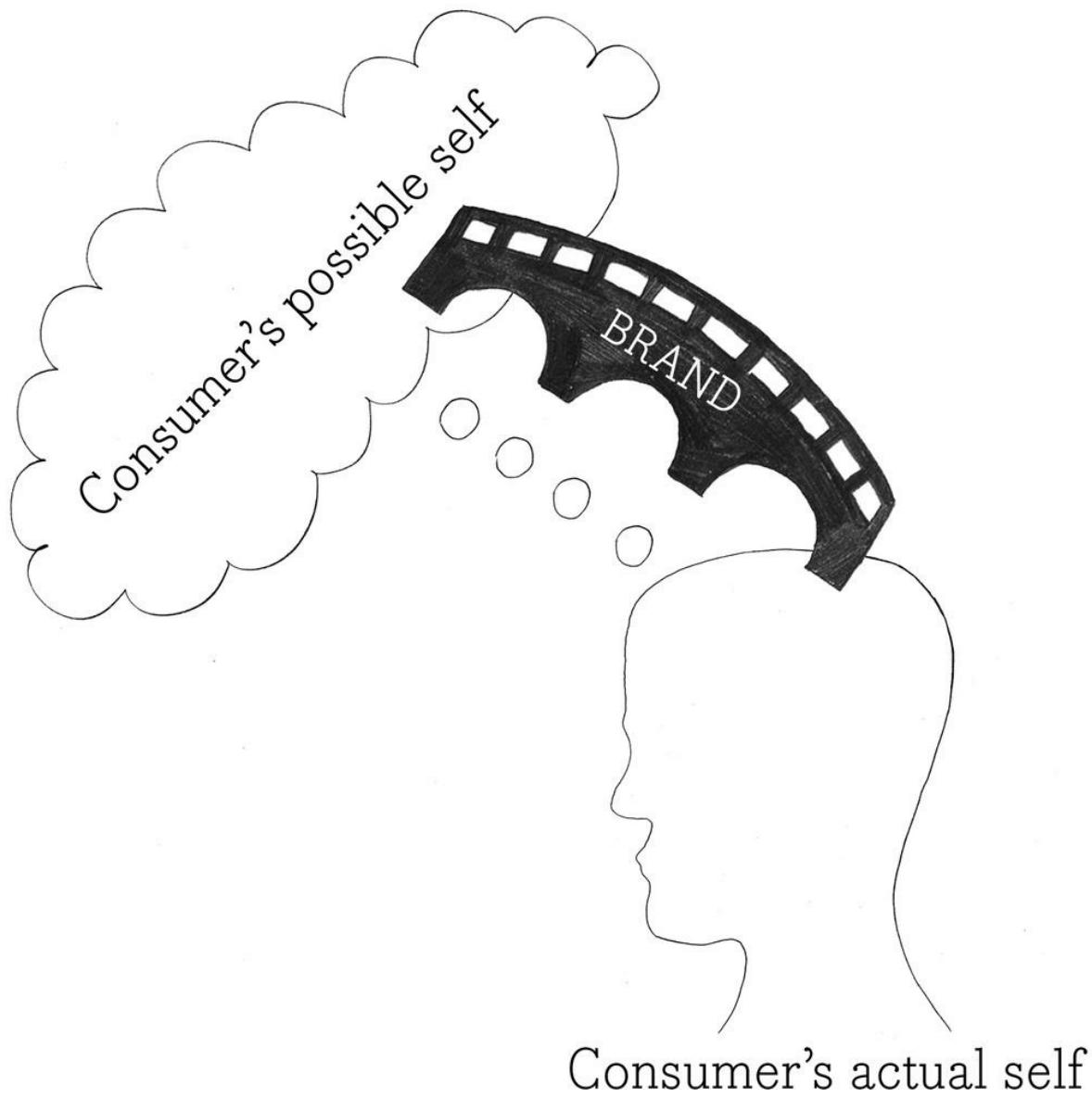
Bottom line: being a chameleon brand makes more sense than being a dinosaur brand. Reminder: dinosaurs are extinct.

Lean Brands Offer Shortcuts to Self-Realization

What is the “Once upon a time” of your brand story? Ask yourself this: “How does what I’m building help consumers close the gap between who they are today and who they want to be tomorrow?” To stand out in a saturated marketplace, brands must introduce themselves to their audience as

propellers. Positioning your brand as an enabler of your target customer's desired state is a way to empathize and build long-term relationships. More on brand stories in [Chapter 3](#).

In our world, there's really no other choice but to be a lean brand—no other choice but to *mean something and be a means to something*. Lean brands inspire consumers to buy apps, order food, trust certain people, and pull books off the shelf by offering ever-evolving shortcuts to their self-realization.



How is your brand building a bridge between who your consumers are and who they want to be?

Recap

In today's saturated marketplace, you'll go nowhere selling a "bunch of features." People want to realize their aspirations, going from point A to point B in their lives, and strong brands provide shortcuts to facilitate that. Lean brands inspire consumers by offering ever-evolving shortcuts to their self-realization. Though you might not think of yourself as a brand manager right now, everything and everyone (and that includes you!) represents at least one brand.

As you navigate through this book, embrace brand development as an evidence-based process—not black magic. You need to go outside right now and start listening. The upcoming chapters will show you what to do once you're there.

[2] Hazel Markus and Elissa Wurf (1987), "The Dynamic Self-Concept: A Social Psychological Perspective," *Annual Review of Psychology* 38, 299.

[3] Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius (1986), "Possible Selves," *American Psychologist*, 41, 9, 954.

Chapter 2. What a Brand Isn't

If you are not a brand, you are a commodity.

—Phillip Kotler

In the next few pages, I will address some of the common lies that we've believed about brands so that you can embrace the rest of the lessons in this book with complete clarity.

Here's something that baffles me, every time. I'm speaking to a crowd of business people and say, "Please raise your hand if you are currently a brand manager." I get two hands. Four, at most. So I go on and make a second request: "Please raise your hand if you currently have a business card." That's where it gets interesting: "Could those of you who raised hands for the business card explain to me what it is you're doing other than managing your personal brand?"

Blank stares. Disbelief. Confusion. You can hear a pin drop. Everyone is expecting me to come up with some brilliant phrase and break the silence. Here's what that phrase is:

We've believed far too many lies about brands. Dangerous lies.

Why These Lies Are Dangerous

At the beginning of my career I, too, was drawn to thinking that "brand" related solely to the *visual* identity of a product or service. I, too, thought of branding as something that a graphic designer could pull off on her own. Sadly, I had also been misinformed by the narrow view that avoids looking at concepts holistically because it just takes too much brain fuel.

The problem with this is that large corporations have the human and capital resources to harness the full power of branding. And, if there's any hope of competing with them, we need to stop comforting ourselves with lies about

what brands are and what they can do.

We must understand that “brand” is a concept that lies at the core of everything we do. Consumers’ ideas of what your brand stands for will arise from multiple, interconnected touchpoints. Yet our everyday definitions of “brand” fail to recognize this all-encompassing nature.

That’s why I decided to take a look at brands from three different lenses: business, design, and psychology. This chapter will walk you through the game-changing power of branding as evidenced in insights from these three distinct disciplines.

By the time I completed my undergraduate business degree, my definition of “brand” had expanded to include concepts like positioning, awareness, equity, and value proposition. Shortly after, I began my master’s degree in design management and my idea of “brand” expanded even further: identity, storytelling, product/service design, personality, differentiation. To top it off, I began a PhD program in psychology where the transcendence of brands in self-realization became crystal clear: brands are related to symbols, self-concepts, and identity construction.

Misconceptions About Brands

Dear reader: if we unlock the power of branding, we may be able to disrupt this marketplace.

But first, let’s get rid of some old misconceptions:

- Brands are logos.
- Brands are superficial.
- Marketing teams manage brands.
- You, alone, manage your brand.
- Products just naturally attract customers.

- Branding is all about awareness.
- You can't measure branding, so you can't manage it.

Chances are, if you've been in the business world long enough, you've also heard and assimilated one or more of these lies. We're going nowhere with this chapter unless we get a few facts straight first.

Brands Are Logos

Let me be clear here: a brand is much more than a logo. If anything, graphics are just one part of the complex stories that customers build when they think of you and your product. Be careful with this one. Not everyone will admit "Brand = Logo" is what they *actually* think. But, in the back of their minds, when you mention the phrase "brand building," they're thinking of someone running a vector program and splashing shapes with funky colors. One of my life goals is to print "Brands > Logos" on t-shirts, mugs, walls, mousepads, and shot glasses, and give them out for free. Companies that fail to get this idea will fail at everything else, so trust me, this is charity work.

Now, if brands aren't logos, what on earth are they? A *brand* is the unique story *that consumers recall when they think of you*. A brand associates your product with your customers' *personal* stories, a particular *personality*, your *promise* to solve a given problem, and your *position* relative to your competitors. Your brand is represented by your visual *symbols* and feeds from multiple conversations where you must participate *strategically*. Therefore, this book will show you how to master three core brand components:

- Your brand's value creation story
- Your brand's visual symbols
- Your brand's growth strategy

Brands Are Superficial

From the same school of thought behind [Brands Are Logos](#) comes “Brands are decoration.” Some honestly believe that branding is ornamental, something you can pull off at the last minute, a second-class concern. Think about this: the average consumer gets a first impression within 50 milliseconds^[4] of visiting your website. Physical encounters do no better: 7 seconds after consumers see you, they’ve already come up with an idea of who you are. Now think again: how many product features can you *possibly* try in 6 seconds? We have reasons to believe that customers will make a first judgment based on brand experience touchpoints *beyond* the product: your landing page, social media, a press release, your business card, your elevator pitch. Is branding starting to sound important? Great, *because it is*.

Marketing People Manage My Brand

Also known as “Let *them* handle it.” Think about it: if branding involves strategically communicating a set of symbols so that customers can construct a story that sets you apart from competitors, how on earth is this just marketers’ business? Making your product or company memorable, distinguishable, and desirable is everyone’s homework, and so is branding. How would the Zappos brand feel today, were it not for Tony Hsieh’s involvement? Or what would a Virgin America flight be like if Sir Richard Branson’s personality didn’t pop up in the slightest details? Can you imagine Apple without Steve Jobs’s heavy hand? *Brands encapsulate, protect, and communicate your value creation strategy.* When customer service talks to a disgruntled client, that’s your brand’s voice working its charm. When finance delivers results to stakeholders, you can hear your brand’s voice going, “Trust me, I’ve got this.” Branding should be a CEO’s priority.

I Control My Brand

There’s no such thing as “solo” brand development. The branding process looks more like an orchestra. Consumers today want to sing with you. They’re happy to buy something they’ve coproduced. They look forward to participating, and every day we get better tools to facilitate it. Despite being homework for everyone in your company, brands are conversations, not

monologues. Bottom line: in the 21st century, you can't just design something and push it onto people.

If the Product Is Good, It Will Naturally Attract Customers

“If you build it, they will come” is no more. “If you build it *with* them, they *might* come” is more like it. People used to be able to find out about brands from watching one TV channel every day, at the same time. Now, not only do they have 24/7 access to thousands of outlets in every possible language, but guess what? They also want to talk back.

Consumers are willing to cocreate with you. They might even know more about your brand than you do. In a way, it’s *their* brand now. (Feeling separation anxiety? Good.) Everything is real-time, opt-in, on-demand, right now, open source. Building isn’t enough.

As you listen to customers’ voices and create your product experience around their needs and aspirations, you are also developing a brand. The ongoing conversations where you bring in insights for product design are an essential part of branding. Your brand story would not be complete without a strong product experience. [Chapter 3](#) will help you build a Brand Journey Map that reconciles your product/service experience design with the unique story that you are trying to communicate in the marketplace.

Branding Only Builds Awareness

Now *this* is something I have a lot of issues with. I’m on an active search for whoever came up with the idea that investing in your brand will only get you awareness. That person needs help before more companies get hurt. A strong brand is a great deal for any company, and here are six reasons to invest in building your own.

1. Strong brands open hearts—and wallets.

If all you can think of when I say “user” is “ID,” we’ve got a lot to work on. I understand that this is how SQL sees your buyers, but please don’t get it

wrong: consumers are not a piece of code. You can't just query them into action. Consider yourself lucky if, by the end of this book, *they* query you into action. They're hesitant, anxious, aspirational, plural, ever-evolving beings looking to protect, improve, and communicate who they are or want to be. If your product is willing to help them achieve this, they're willing to open their wallets.

You might have heard about Airbnb, an online community of hosts and guests where you can offer or find a place to stay in over 190 countries around the world. As a lodging solution, Airbnb competes with thousands of hotels and travel sites. However, instead of trying to compete on price, the founders decided to compete on *brand*. A brand that became a steward “between two people, where one has and the other wants,” as cofounder Joe Gebbia told *Marketing Magazine* in 2013.^[5] As such, the Airbnb brand began to represent a series of values that travelers identified with: community, authenticity, discovery, and empathy. In the same interview, Gebbia pointed out that Airbnb had “dismal traction” in its first two years, but the idea of building brand credibility and proving that its premise was a viable way to book lodging kept it going.

2. Trying something new? A strong brand makes it credible.

I still remember the day Apple launched its first iPad. The name became an instant female hygiene joke for college students everywhere. People couldn't understand what this thing, larger than an iPhone and smaller than a MacBook, could possibly offer. Still, and in a surprising market reaction, Apple's iPad became a bestseller. Ever thought strong brands have some sort of creative license? That's because they do. Several studies conclude that strong brands can accelerate technology adoption^[6] and improve (perceived) product performance.^{[7][8]}

A stellar case of the “creative license” granted to strong brands is Google's Glass Explorer Program. So far, program “seats” had been granted only to a group of developers who paid \$1,500 in exchange for being the first to be able to “make, to tinker, to create, to shape, and to share through Glass.”^[9] On April 15, 2014, Google opened up a limited number of seats to the general

public for the first time.^[10] The Google brand generates so much trust that not only were thousands of Explorers willing to pay \$1,500 (plus tax) to test out an unfinished Glass, but the rest of us (who were willing, but not able) were exposed to the following message:

That's all, folks. We're out of spots in the Explorer Program for now, but may have more to share soon. Sign up below to stay updated.

AZCentral.com's headline one day after was on point: "Google Glass Sold Like Hotcakes for \$1,500 a Pair."^[11] Case in point: strong brands earn the trust necessary to introduce disruptive new products that are almost instantly welcomed by their customer base.

3. If your datacenter crashes and burns, your brand will still be here.

We've all seen legendary companies sink time and time again, but somehow—and to everyone's disbelief, their well-positioned brands stay afloat. If I asked you about your startup's assets, you'd probably start counting CPUs, desks, lamps, servers, paper planes—anything you could get your hands on. Here's a heads up: your brand counts, too. Sometimes it counts even when everything else is worthless. Sometimes, when your product fails (and it will), you'll find your brand has saved the day. Sometimes Twinkies die and come back, out of a deep, meaningful brand connection with consumers.^[12] Sometimes bankrupt companies are worth millions simply because their brand story is.

Ever heard of Frommer's Travel Guides? In 1957, a young man by the name of Arthur Frommer published a travel guide called "Europe on \$5 a Day" during his time as part of the US army intelligence in Europe.^[13] The Frommer's brand quickly grew into an empire that includes over 300 guidebooks and the Frommers.com website. In 1977, Simon & Schuster became interested and bought the rights to publish Frommer's guidebooks. John Wiley & Sons did the same in 2001, and Google bought it from them in 2012. However, there were strong rumors that Google would kill the print travel guides.

In an interesting turn of events, Arthur Frommer bought back his brand in

2013^[14] and is now relaunching it, in his words, as the “oldest fledgling publisher in world history.”^[15] Undoubtedly, the Frommer’s brand has had its ups and downs, but the fact that its value has been repeatedly recognized (and paid for) by industry giants shows that a strong brand goes well beyond marketplace fluctuations. Frommer’s had built a reputation, credibility, and a series of associations that were worth saving and revitalizing.

4. It's your edge.

Strong brands build high barriers to entry. A well-established brand can enhance your competitive advantage by preventing others from grabbing a slice of your market share easily.

Take Virgin America, for instance. Air travel used to be an industry with high barriers to entry, a small number of competitors to watch out for, and little or no incentives for brand differentiation. With the emergence of low-cost carriers and the rising prominence of (previously small) international airlines, the brandscape has become increasingly interesting. Consumers have more choices. Competitors are lowering price standards. The brand game is on.

In the midst of this exciting paradigm change, a young Virgin America was rated as the best airline in the United States in terms of quality during 2013.^[16] The result is no coincidence. Founder Richard Branson and his team have made it clear that the Virgin brand is based on “discount pricing and a hip, stylish customer experience.”^[17] This stylish customer experience, embedded in the Virgin brand story, becomes real for travelers in the form of on-time arrivals, little or no involuntarily denied boardings (“getting bumped from the flight”), and little or no mishandled bags—all criteria evaluated by the national Airline Quality Rating.

Virgin America’s strong sense of brand has given it a competitive edge in the marketplace that is yet to be matched by its closest competitors, according to the most recent national quality rankings.

5. It's your price premium.

Here’s an idea for the number-oriented: a well-positioned brand can get away with higher prices. Do higher margins ring a bell, Finance? Try this: go to

any mall. Feel the sudden urge to splurge on some *XY* branded jeans. Swipe your card. Feel bad about it. Now do me a favor and feel good again: this behavior is not only normal, but expected of you. You've been set up. And the great news is, *you can also set other people up*. A price premium is the percentage by which your product is more expensive than your competitors'. Strong brands can raise their prices and see consumers stick with them even after they do so. This idea (inelastic response to price increases) is one of the core advantages of sound brand development.

If you've been paying any attention to the smartphone and tablet market, you've probably noticed that Apple's products are consistently more expensive than its competitors'. How can it pull off such a price premium when there's a general market trend for cheaper devices? The answer lies in its brand story: the positioning, product experience, and promise that it's built around the Apple trademark.

To begin with, Apple has leveraged product design as a core competitive advantage. CEO Tim Cook told *Business Insider* that "there's always a large junk part of the market"^[18] and Apple is "not in the junk business." In doing so, Cook reinforced Apple's longstanding message that quality comes at a price. And the market has evidently responded well to this idea: CNBC's 2012 All-America Economic Survey estimated that "the average (US) household has 1.6 Apple devices, with almost one-quarter planning to buy at least one more in the next year."^[19]

Regardless of how the product's raw technical specifications stack against those of competing brands, Apple has built a loyal customer base that is able and willing to pay extra for the aspirations and lifestyle associated with the brand.

6. In a fast-paced world, strong brands are often shortcuts.

To understand why brands work as "shortcuts" in purchase decisions, consider the last time that you went out shopping for medicine. You are feeling ill and know that all you need is a painkiller. You walk down the analgesic aisle at the drugstore and there they are: at least 20 brands that offer to soothe your pain faster, at a lower price, with fewer side effects, or a

combination of the three.

Think fast: what do you grab? The first brand that you just thought about has conquered your top-of-mind awareness.^[20] Put simply: it is the number one brand in your consideration set as you are trying to solve the problem at hand. Another way to describe what a well-positioned brand can achieve is *salience*.^[21] Salience is what happens when a brand stands out among the rest as you, as a consumer, are trying to solve a problem/pain. In the midst of your purchase decision, there are brands that you are unaware of, brands that you simply know about (i.e., belong to your consideration set), and a few top brands that pop among the rest.

The pain that you just thought about is physical, but think about other needs that may require a purchase decision. Think about the pain that *your* brand is trying to solve. These brands that pop become shortcuts. Useful, comfortable, and (quite) profitable shortcuts. By communicating effectively what your brand is and what it offers, you are building stronger associations that can earn you top-of-mind awareness among consumers. But awareness doesn't stop there: it becomes a decision-making shortcut.

I'd Rather Invest in Product Quality

To this, I'd say, "Congratulations." You just figured out your first brand value: quality. Now don't stop there. Branding doesn't compete with product for importance. They're not even separate. Eric Ries said it well:^[22]

Everything that the customer experiences is the product. This is something that both media companies and product startups don't understand. Things like blogging or creating content or audience awareness around the product is considered a secondary experience, a secondary part of the company, which is completely insane. In many cases, what a customer experiences about your product first is the media long before they experience the product itself. If you're out of alignment on those two things, you're causing yourself problems... ^[23]

A word to the skeptical: it's impossible not to have a brand. However, it is possible to be unaware of it. I hope that by the time you finish reading this book, you belong to the group that knows. The fact that you haven't thought of investing (time and effort) in your brand before doesn't make it any less crucial. Actually, you already have a brand, so open up your ears to get an idea of where it's standing.

Remember the old phrase “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent”? Here’s the thing: *anyone can make your brand inferior in your absence*. So the faster you join this game, the less damage control you’ll have to do.

So, you don’t have money to invest in your brand?

You do have money for damage control, right?

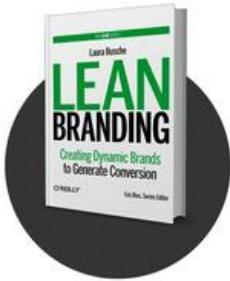
I Can’t Measure It, I Can’t Manage It

I sat through all those accounting courses in college. I’ve heard what they had to say. No wonder some people think brands are flimsy! We’ve been told they’re part of a category called “intangible assets” on the balance sheet. Here’s a word about intangible assets: they’re “identifiable nonmonetary assets without physical substance.”^[24] Now ponder that for a few seconds. *Without physical substance*. So I can’t really touch my pizza when it’s been served cold, and someone has failed on his brand promise. And I can’t really feel my head hit against the keyboard when some site is down *again*.

Brands are my thing because I’ve seen them from *every angle*. I’ve seen them work. I’ve bought them because they do. I’ve seen them boost bottom lines. They’ve saved my startup and dozens of other startups I’ve mentored—oh so many times.

And I’m here to prove that they’ll work for you, too.

EVERYONE
can make your brand inferior
in your absence.



Recap

Graphics are just one part of the complex stories that customers build when they think of you or your product. There's much more to your brand than a logo. *A brand is the unique story that consumers recall when they think of you.* It associates your product with your customers' *personal* stories, a particular *personality*, your *promise* to solve a given problem, and your *position* relative to your competitors. Your brand is represented by your visual *symbols* and feeds from multiple conversations where you must participate *strategically*. Consumers are hesitant, anxious, aspirational, plural, ever-evolving beings looking to protect, improve, and communicate who they are and want to be. Successful brands *listen*.

There are several reasons to start building your brand today. Refusing to recognize the importance of branding will only hurt you: everyone can make your brand inferior in your absence. You will find that developing a strong brand reaps rewards far beyond simple awareness: price premiums, a strong sense of direction for your company, a competitive edge, and a creative license to test novel products.

[4] Gitte Lindgaard et al., "Attention Web Designers: You have 50 Milliseconds to Make a Good First impression," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 25, no. 2 (2006): 115–126.

[5] Alex Brownsell, "Airbnb Co-Founder Joe Gebbia on How Brands Can Bring People Together," *Marketing Magazine*, October 6, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1kHCHJ7>.

[6] David Corkindale and Marcus Belder (2009), "Corporate Brand Reputation and the Adoption of Innovations," *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 18, 4, 242–250.

[7] Niraj Dawar and Philip Parker (1994), "Marketing Universals: Consumers' Use of Brand Name, Price, Physical Appearance, and Retailer Reputation as Signals of Product Quality," *Journal of Marketing* 58, 2, 81.

[8] Jacob Jacoby et al. (1971), "Price, Brand Name, and Product Composition Characteristics as Determinants of Perceived Quality," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 55, 6, 570–579.

[9] <http://www.google.com/glass/start/how-to-get-one/>

[10] Darrell Etherington, "Google Lets Anyone in the U.S. Become a Glass Explorer for \$1,500 Starting April 15," *TechCrunch*, April 15, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1kHDauH>.

[11] Laurie Merrill, "Google Glass Sold Like Hotcakes for \$1,500 a Pair," AZCentral.com, April 16, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1kHDo52>.

[12] The Twinkies brand was purchased and saved out of bankruptcy in 2013 by a joint venture between

private equity firms Apollo Global Management and Metropoulos & Co.

[13] <http://www.frommers.com/about>

[14] Steven Musil, “Arthur Frommer Reacquires Travel Book Brand from Google,” *CNET*, April 3, 2013, <http://cnet.co/1kHDHnt>.

[15] Christopher Reynolds, “Frommer Guidebooks Come Roaring Back,” *Seattle Times*, November 4, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1kHE0Ys>.

[16] “Virgin America Rated Best in U.S. Airline Quality: Study,” Reuters, April 7, 2014, <http://reut.rs/1kHEbCZ>.

[17] Joan Voight, “Where’s the Party? At 30,000 Feet,” *AdWeek*, February 5, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1kHEkq0>.

[18] Jay Yarow, “Tim Cook on Apple vs. Android: ‘We’re Not in the Junk Business,’” *Business Insider*, September 19, 2013, <http://read.bi/1kHEWw5>.

[19] Jodi Gralnick, “Apples Are Growing in American Homes,” CNBC, March 28, 2012, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/46857053>.

[20] David Aaker (1991), “Managing Brand Equity,” Free Press, New York. <http://amzn.to/1lCHtHT>

[21] Joseph Alba and Amitava Chattopadhyay (1986), “Salience Effects in Brand Recall,” *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 23, 4, 363–369.

[22] Ries is the author of *The Lean Startup*, a book that has generated an entire movement that is transforming how new products are built and launched.

[23] Amanda Lewan, “Eric Ries on Creating Media for Your Startup,” *Michipreneur*, March 28, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1kHFpOD>.

[24] Bruce Mackenzie et al. (2013), Wiley IFRS 2013: Interpretation and Application of International Financial Reporting Standards. 10 edition. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Part II. Build

To be able to iterate, you have to find a place to start. You can't really improve when what you have is a blank sheet of paper—can you? And yet, that blank sheet of paper is all that you need for **Part II**. Get ready to build!

In **Part II** we will develop the first version of your lean brand so that you can join the marketplace and measure and learn where it should be going next.

The purpose of this section is to help you create a minimal set of brand ingredients that are viable in the marketplace. If traditional brands are burgers, we will be cooking sliders. Sliders that, as you'll find out later, consumers can add ketchup and mustard to. A solid, yet unfinished, recipe that responds to consumer behavior—and therefore, to wallets. Take a look at the following recipe to get an idea of the ingredients that we will be building throughout this section.

In **Chapter 3**, **Chapter 4**, and **Chapter 5**, you will learn how to master three core brand components:

- Your brand's value creation story
- Your brand's visual symbols
- Your brand's growth strategy

By the end of **Part II** you will have the confidence and tools you need to cook this brand slider recipe. Don't get *too* confident, though: **Part III** is all about taste tests.

THE LEAN BRAND RECIPE

You will need:

STORY

1. Name
2. Positioning Statement
3. Promise
4. Personas
5. Product Experience
6. Personality
7. Pricing

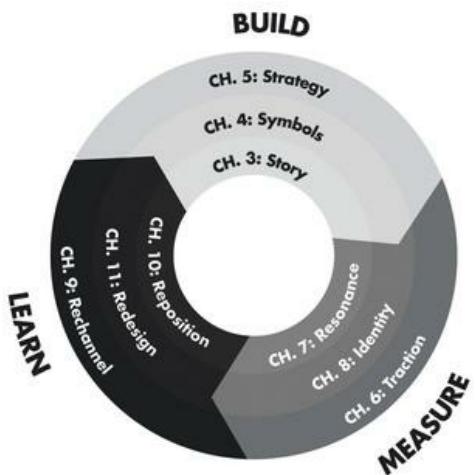
SYMBOLS

8. Logo
9. Color Palette
10. Typography
11. Imagery
12. Stationery: The Business Card
13. Collateral: One-sheet
14. Slide Deck

STRATEGY

15. Social Media Marketing
16. Landing Page
17. Search Engine Optimization
18. Paid Advertising
19. Email List
20. Marketing Video
21. Public Relations
22. Content Marketing: Blogging
23. Point of Purchase Optimization
24. Review Systems
25. Partnerships

Instructions:



LEAN BRANDING

is about building chameleon brands. There's no use in standing still in the marketplace when consumers' ideas of who they are are changing all over the place. Brands today are better off listening to these changes and learning from them.

Lean Brands have conversations, not monologues. They embrace the fact that their mission is to help consumers get closer to who they want to be. They're comfortable with the fact that this "who they want to be" is always evolving. So they evolve too: iterating continuously in endless cycles of building, measuring and learning.

www.leanbranding.com

This recipe shows the 25 brand ingredients that we will be discussing throughout the book.

Chapter 3. Brand Story

Throughout this chapter, we will look at the six essential parts of a lean brand story: positioning, promise, personas, personality, product, and pricing.

I've never met someone who did not aspire to be something more. Even Homer Simpson, with his absolute lack of will and ultimate disregard for the future, at times aspired to be a better husband, a fitter couch potato, a less miserable son to his old man. I've heard 5-year-olds state with absolute certainty that they will be president. Someone is sweating his head off right now at some ridiculously expensive gym because he aspires to be fitter. As you read this, someone is pulling an all-nighter studying to earn class valedictorian status—or maybe even reading this book to up her brand game (in which case I highly appreciate it!). I'm pretty sure someone is daydreaming to the sound of Bruno Mars's "Billionaire." Someone (perhaps you) aspires to build a successful product that customers open their wallets and hearts for. If that is indeed you, please hold on to this thought: *aspirations*.

Behind every great brand is a promise that fulfills its customers' aspirations. We are in the business of taking customers from A to B, where A is who they are today and B is who they want to be tomorrow. Consider the products you love—sports attire, note-taking apps, electronic devices, chocolate ice cream...this book—and how they've made you feel closer to whom you want to be.

When most people think about aspirations, they imagine long-term dreams or perpetual objectives. But in reality, aspirations come in all sizes, time lengths, and levels of difficulty. After all, an aspiration is nothing more than a pursuit—an urge that influences our daily decisions. Whether that aim is to become a more organized worker, a more inspired creative, or the president of the United States is irrelevant.

All human aspirations are opportunities for brands to build relationships.

Here are some sample aspirations to think about:

- Be *independent* and perceived as such by others. Become an autonomous individual by purchasing products and services that empower you to do more and better on your own.
- Be more *relaxed*. Live a less stressful lifestyle by purchasing products and services that help release different kinds of tension.
- Be *unique* and perceived as such by others. Express yourself and your worldview by purchasing products and services that let others know who you are and reflect your identity to the world.
- Enact a *new role* in life. Embody a “new persona” by purchasing products and services that help you attain a new professional or personal position.
- Engage in *better relationships*. Improve the way you connect with other human beings by purchasing products and services that strengthen your social circle and increase your sense of belonging.
- Be *more stable*. Avoid danger by purchasing products and services that increase your safety.
- Be *well-known*. Become accomplished by purchasing products and services that help you become more recognized and reputable.
- Be a *genuinely better* human being. Grow individually by purchasing products and services that boost your professional, spiritual, and emotional development.

Forget Everything You've Heard About Brand Stories

Our mission for this chapter is to understand whom we're selling to and learn

the best way to show them who we are, what we offer, how we're different, and how we promise to help them. The good news is that there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Human beings have been learning via stories forever, and there's simply no better tool to send our brand message across.

For some reason, when they hear about “brand stories,” some people imagine their company’s CEO reading to a potential buyer sitting on his lap, in an altruist display of emotion and mutual love. *Rewind*. Yes, there might be some reading. And yes, we need the CEO on board. But, while emotion is a part of the whole thing, please remember this:

Your brand story's “happily ever after” involves open wallets.

Seth Godin has an interesting thought on the matter:

Stories and irrational impulses are what change behavior. Not facts or bullet points.

Some other people hear me say “brand story,” and “storytelling” immediately comes to mind. I’d like to let you know that “telling” is not what we’re doing here. We’re aiming for “story-showing.” Telling isn’t enough. Brand communications are not about explain-time, justify-time, defend-time...blah-time. Please keep the idea of *showtime* close to heart. This is why **Chapter 5** is all about “story-showing”—feel free to take a peek if you’re curious at this point.

But before we deal with ways to show our brand story, we need to create one. I know social media, digital channels, videos, websites, and many other tools are appealing at the moment. I know that you think they might help your product scale instantaneously (miraculously); that they’re just what the doctor ordered. *I also need you to understand that you better stay away from them unless you have a story to tell.*

Otherwise, digital channels just have a way of...well...swallowing you.

Remember this:

Digital channels are just tools to show (what should be) a meaningful brand story.

Having a brand story is not optional. If you don’t start writing it, please worry because—mark my words—*someone else will write it for you*. In my experience, only extremely disgusted or extremely pleased customers will put

any effort into contributing to your brand story, so imagine how *that* would turn out without your attention. Brand storytelling is your unique chance to be persuasive and make the case for your product.

To take full advantage of this opportunity, we will answer five simple questions for our customers—though, as you’ll see, there’s really one big, profitable, underlying question (*Why should I buy from you?*):

Brand story part	Customer asks	Customer really thinks
Positioning	“How are you useful to me?”	WHY should I buy from you?
Promise	“What do you promise to do for me?”	Why SHOULD I buy from you?
Personas	“What do I need/want from you?”	Why should I buy from you?
Personality	“Who are you?”	Why should I buy from YOU ?
Product	“What will you offer, over time?”	Why should I BUY from you?
Pricing	“How much is this going to cost me?”	Why should I BUY from you?

First Things First: What's Your Name Again?

Someone has to come up with a name for the “fear of naming a new product.” I am positive that this is an *actual* phobia. Side effects include headache, insomnia, anxiety, and utter bipolarity. I also blame this entire situation on superstitious nonsense.

Listen: I’d be a terrible marketer if I told you that your name doesn’t matter. It does, deeply. What I have an issue with is the amount of time some people waste naming something that *isn’t really anything yet*. Somehow, we’ve come to believe that even before the product has some sort of clear function (i.e., adds value), we will reach nirvana and come up with a *million-dollar name*. Said “million-dollar name” will then take a mediocre product from zero to millions within a day.

Wake-up call: *there is no million-dollar name*. There are, if you work hard enough, great *products* that make millions in the marketplace aided by an equally great name. Bottom line:

A great product deserves an equally great name that does it justice.

That being said, there *are* some ways in which a fitting name can make the difference for your product. If you already have a name, feel free to jump to **Part III**, where you'll learn how to measure its impact. If you are just getting started, you'll find the process much easier if you answer these questions (and please do):

1. Look around. What names are your competitors using to brand their products? (Write at least 20.)
2. What word or words encompass the *most important* thing your product is here to change? (Jot down a list of at least 20.)

Go literal: write down words commonly used in the industry that you're in, the type of product you're trying to sell, and the people who will buy it.

Sometimes we only think of nouns (i.e., things), but there's actually a vast list of verbs (actions) and adjectives (descriptors) that are great sources for names:

- Dropbox (verb + noun)
- Pinkberry (adjective + noun)
- Goodreads (adjective + noun)
- Instagram (adjective + noun)
- MySpace (adjective + noun)

Go figurative: use metaphors; find ideas that are related to the experience that you are creating.

3. Which of these words (or combination of words) could best convey what your product does? (Narrow it down to 10.)
4. Which of these options is most original and therefore recognizable in

the marketplace?

5. Which of these options can be trademarked and does not interfere with another company's legal rights?

Gather Your Brand Ingredients

Remember the recipe we just learned about a few pages ago? That Lean Branding recipe included the 25 ingredients that we will be building throughout **Part II**, and the time has come to find our brand story ingredients: *positioning, promise, personas, personality, product, and pricing*.

Positioning: How Are You Useful to Me?

We've already discussed aspirations: those possible selves that consumers are constantly striving for. We saw how brands can provide shortcuts to satisfy these aspirations and build relationships that go beyond a simple feature set. Our brand *adds value* when it helps a customer go from A to B, where B is whom they want to be. But just how do we go about making them understand and remember what we're here to do?

That's where positioning comes around. I know it sounds like a complex term, but it really isn't. If we are going to enter the marketplace to help customers go from A to B in their lives, we need to *position* our brand as an aspiration enabler. As a problem solver. As a propeller. Positioning is simply finding and taking a space within the marketplace that projects your brand as the "aspiration enabler" for a certain customer segment.

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: NAMING RESOURCES

Where to find name inspiration:

- <http://www.leandomainsearch.com>
- <http://www.panabee.com>
- <https://www.namefind.com>

- <http://www.namestation.com>
- <http://www.namemesh.com/>
- <http://www.domai.nr>

Where to figure out brand name availability (US trademark):

- United States: <http://tmsearch.uspto.gov>
- European Union: <https://oami.europa.eu/eSearch>

Where to figure out domain name availability:

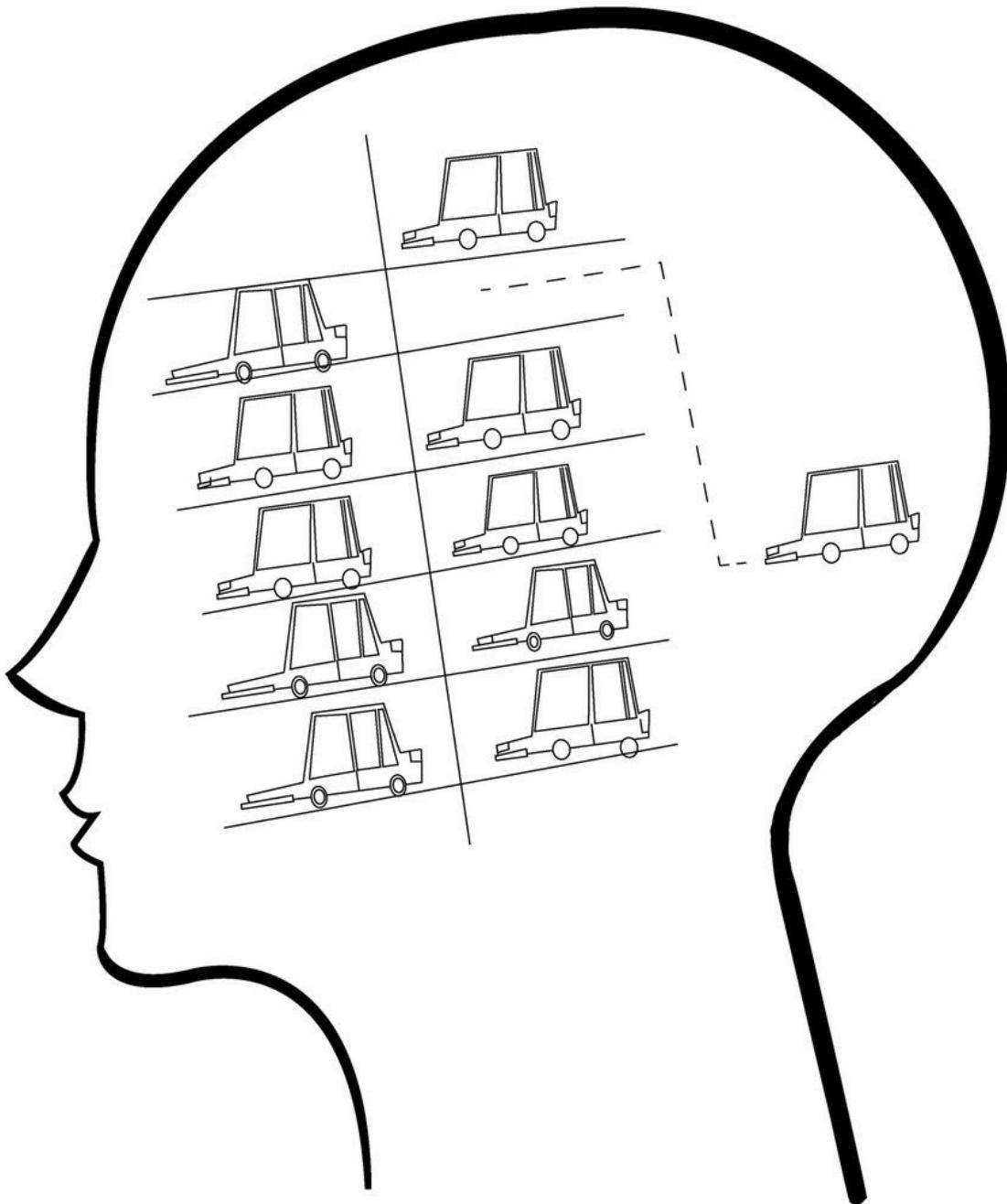
- <http://www.godaddy.com>
- <http://www.namechk.com>

In a nutshell:

Positioning is finding the right parking space inside the consumer's mind and going for it before someone else takes it.

These questions are key to building your brand's initial positioning:^[25]

1. Who is your target customer?
2. Which of your customer's aspirations will your brand propel?

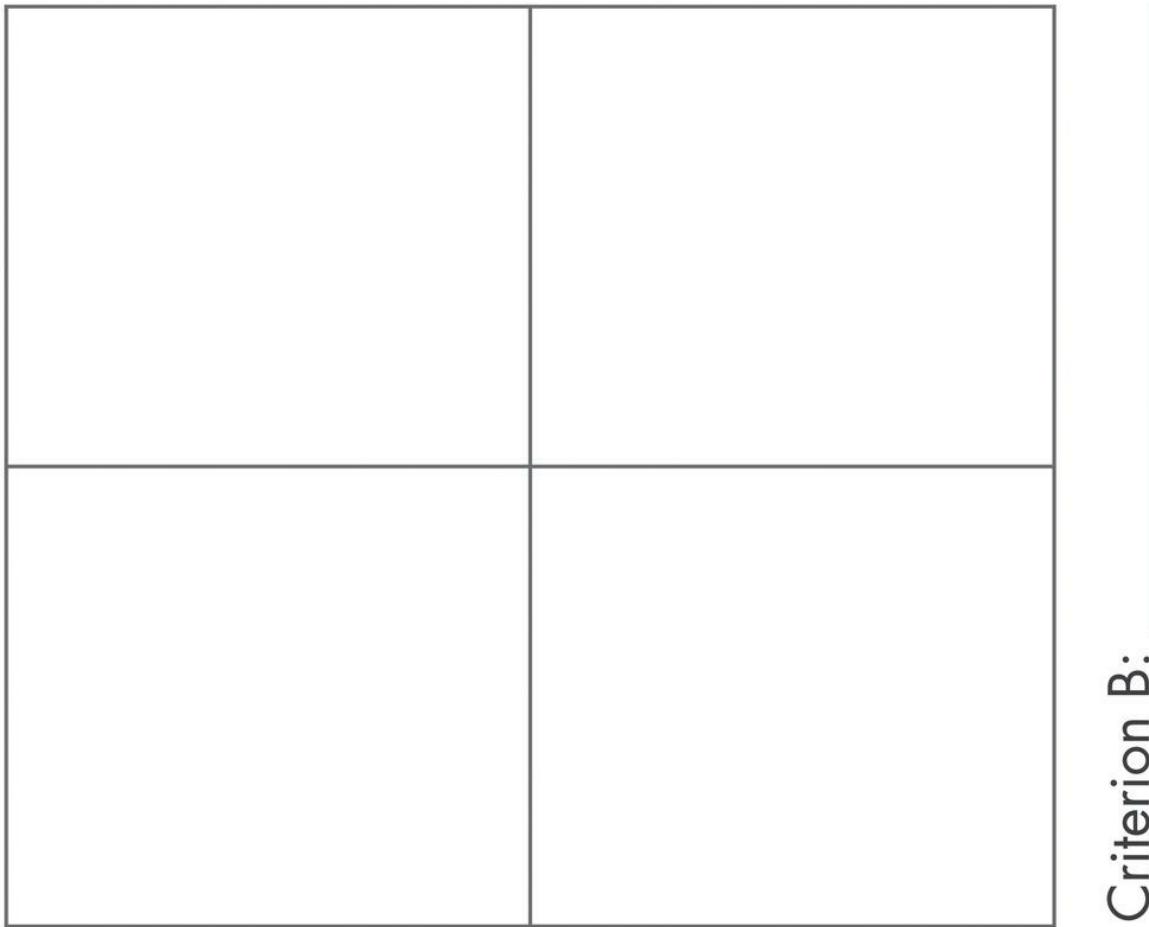


3. What will make your customer be most compelled to buy from you?
4. Who is your main competitor?
5. What makes you different from this competitor?

As a first step, consider mapping out who your main competitors are and how

your brand's offer compares to theirs. There is a very handy, visual tool to simplify this comparison. It is called a *positioning map*, and it will help you understand which brands you are competing with and what makes your offer stand out.

POSITIONING MAP



Criterion A: _____

To build this map, select two criteria that your main competing brands and your own can be ranked on. For example, a fashion brand could select price and apparel formality as its criteria. Then, assign one of the criteria to the horizontal axis and the other one to the vertical axis. Finally, map out the brands in your competitive space according to how they rank on both axes.

It is important to understand that this initial positioning is an ideal space that

will not match consumer perception perfectly. This positioning map will change over time, and it is your job to make sure that continuous measurement guides any direction changes. [Chapter 7](#) presents strategies to measure whether your positioning is resonating well in the marketplace.

The positioning statement

A positioning statement answers three main questions:

- Which space are you trying to occupy?
- What is the main aspiration that you are trying to satisfy?
- Who else is there (competing with you)?

No need to make our lives any more complicated (this is Lean Branding, remember?). Geoffrey Moore Consulting created a very effective template to create your positioning statement that has been used by companies everywhere:

For (*target customer*)

Who (*statement of the need or opportunity*)

The (*product name*) is a (*product category*)

That (*key benefit, compelling reason to buy*)

Unlike (*primary competitive alternative*)

Our product (*statement of primary differentiation*)

Fill it out. Done. Use it, use it, and abuse it. You can't go wrong.

Promise: What Do You Promise to Do for Me?

Keep it short and sweet. This is basically a fun-sized version of your positioning statement, emphasizing on your core value offer. It's the *one* thing you promise that will keep customers coming back, crafted into a

memorable, short phrase that they can remember easily. It's your "Save money, live better" (Walmart), your "Remember everything" (Evernote), your "Eat fresh" (Subway)...you get the point.

Bob Dorf^[26] has labeled this promise "Bumper Sticker" and has some great advice about how to make it shine. Take a look at the following "Get on It" sidebar. If you still need more ideas for your brand promise, check out the "Inspiration Hack" sidebar on the next page.

GET ON IT: THE BUMPER-STICKER BRAND PROMISE

"A bumper sticker can't be more than a handful of words. Imagine a 12pt bumper sticker. Nobody in the car behind you could read the words on that bumper sticker unless they crashed into you! It's got to be a few words that summarize hopefully in a catchy, memorable, inviting way what it is that this company does that's special. It's really your brand promise all rolled into one mouthful of words."

—Bob Dorf

Personas: What Do I Need or Want from You?

Every brand story needs characters, and that's exactly what buyer personas are. We are going to create fake people with *very real* needs and aspirations to inspire everything our brand is, does, and communicates. This entire book is hanging on the idea that you are aware of who these characters are and are willing to constantly monitor how they act. So stay with me on these simple ways to find out who your buyer personas are and what they want. It's our only shot at making sure that what they want is *you*.

Most entrepreneurs will tell you that they "absolutely know the buyer." There are a few harsh truths that must be told at this point:

- Even if you think you know what buyers want or need, this is constantly *changing*.
- Even if buyers think they know what they want or need, sometimes they won't say it.
- Sometimes buyers have *no idea* what they want or need, but you can find

out by observing.

INSPIRATION HACK: BRAND PROMISES

Get inspired with these 10 brand promises that have endured time and our short (and getting shorter) attention spans:

- Office Depot: Taking Care of Business
- MGM: Means Great Movies
- MasterCard: There are some things that money can't buy. For everything else there's MasterCard.
- Airbnb: Find a Place to Stay
- Foursquare: Find Great Places Near You
- Las Vegas: What happens here, stays here.
- Disneyland: The Happiest Place on Earth
- Crest: Healthy, Beautiful Smiles for Life
- CrazyEgg: Visualize Your Visitors
- Zoho: Work. Online.

Go out and learn cautiously from what your buyers *say*, and rigorously based on what they *do*. This “going out there” is something anthropologists, designers, and professionals from many other disciplines know as *ethnography*.

NOTE

Marketers have been using focus groups and surveys for years, but besides not being time- or cost-efficient, they are often performed out of context. Meaning: is there a point in asking someone what she thinks by removing her from the place where she usually does her thinking and pretending she'll do *exactly* as she says? I won't bore you with method wars here, but bear in mind that we are looking for the most efficient way to learn about our buyers in order to make decisions that are not only informed, but also *timely*.

There are probably a million ways to conduct ethnographic research (i.e., going out there and observing people). For the purpose of remaining lean, let me introduce you to four that are very time/cost efficient.

Secondary research

Look out for data on your buyers from magazines, databases (if you have access to any), newspapers, industry white papers, and reputable sources that you can trust. This will give you a broad sense of how the market is doing and general trends to keep in mind as you observe your buyers.

In-depth interviews

Sit down with as many potential buyers as you can and ask them as many questions as you need to start discovering patterns among them. There are some very specific items we are looking for, and you will find a list of sample questions later in the chapter. Some people suggest you should also interview existing customers who both love and hate your product. In case you are just getting started, and you have no customers to conduct these with, arrange for interviews with potential customers. In [Chapter 6](#), we will come back to this and apply it with existing customers.

Interviews were a vital part of the Apps.co entrepreneurship program in Colombia. Since teams were expected to go from idea to minimum viable product in eight weeks, the program demanded that a number of interviews be conducted during the first few weeks. These interviews would guide the development of the product and the brand that would project it into the world.

In an outstanding case of customer discovery, a mobile app called Bites pivoted from a food delivery intermediary into a tool to improve the on-site restaurant experience. After dozens of interviews with potential customers, the team realized that their market felt fascinated and moved by authentic food photography. They were eager to see pictures taken by other “foodies” and were more comfortable trusting their peers for restaurant recommendations. Perhaps repeating this exercise somewhere else on Earth would reveal different insights. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the whole point behind conducting interviews while you are building your brand: going

beyond your own assumptions.

Fly on the wall

I absolutely love this method. Picture a fly on the wall. That's pretty much what you'll be. This type of observation consists of becoming a part of any given environment for a few hours. You are trying to understand your buyers' context: what threats and opportunities can you spot? If you're interested in teachers, for example, visit a school for a given number of hours and record as many details as you can about the school day.

In 2012, my agency was hired to build a local politician's online brand presence. She had already been elected but was having trouble empathizing with the citizens who hadn't voted for her. During a brainstorming session, we decided to use expressions from citizens themselves to communicate her brand message. We would address naysayers and continue appealing to sympathizers by using their *own* terms and language.

To do so, we followed the politician in every single public event for four months. We did not intervene or ask any questions during this time. Our team was just *present*, taking notes and analyzing what came out of citizens' mouths. Later, we would synthesize these insights and come up with messages that reflected the citizens' own concerns and satisfactions. Our social media engagement skyrocketed, and the conversation (which had remained stagnant for months) activated around the topics that citizens were actually interested in hearing.

Shadowing

Here's a classy term for some serious stalking activity—except you will formally approach someone to ask his permission to stick with him for a couple of hours. The idea here is to get a sense of what his particular routine is like, what are some needs and aspirations he might not be willing or able to declare verbally but are visible to you, and what channels would work best to reach him, among others. You must remain unnoticed and avoid disturbing his routine. This is *academic* stalking.

Take a few minutes to imagine the aspiration that your brand is here to

facilitate. Are you trying to make it easier for customers with a fast-paced lifestyle to share their files? Are you trying to provide a healthy or environmentally friendly option in the midst of a toxic marketplace? Are you building an app to optimize the way I spend my time? Are you a political brand offering to bring prosperity and education? This answer is a vital starting point for the observations that you will take note of while shadowing a subject.

For Procter & Gamble, this answer was once “we are trying to offer a better way to clean a floor.”^[27] In 1994, the company hired an innovation and design consultancy called Continuum to figure out a way to reinvent the act of cleaning floors. To do so, researchers followed individual people as they cleaned their own kitchen floors. They found out, among others, that “mops worked mostly by the adhesion of dirt to the mop and people seemed to spend almost as much time rinsing their mop as they did cleaning the floor.” To solve it, they designed a new product that would bring their newfound idea of “Fast Clean” to life. The rest is Swiffer history.

As you follow your potential or existing customers, take note of the activities, environment, interactions, objects, and users involved in their routine. These five types of observations belong to a framework called AEIOU (after their initials) that was developed by a group of researchers at the Doblin Group in 1991 to make ethnography easier to record.^[28]

Here is what some sample, raw shadowing observations might look like, as coded with the AEIOU framework. You can also use this framework to record your fly-on-the-wall observations:

Subject: John, potential user for our to-do list app	
Started: 03/05/2013 8AM Ended: 03/05/2013 11AM	
Type of observation	Notes
Activities	Getting ready for work Driving to work Picking up coffee before work

	Accomplishing daily tasks
Environment	<p>Home: 2BR apartment, NW side of town. Office space in living room. Pinboard next to desk. Monthly calendar pad on top of desk.</p> <p>Coffee shop: dim lighting, slow jazz music.</p> <p>Office: personal cubicle, white light, notebooks scattered on desk. Monthly calendar on cubicle wall.</p>
Interactions	Drinking coffee, talking to barista, printing a last-minute document, checking email on smartphone, driving compact car to metro station, parking car, taking metro to work. Checking email on desktop computer again. Adds some dates to wall calendar. Added sticky note to computer screen. Completing yesterday's pending tasks first. Tossing sticky note once task completed.
Objects	Monthly calendar pad on home desk, cappuccino with low-fat milk, Metro card, printer, 21.5" iMac computer, colored sticky notes, iOS smartphone, monthly calendar on cubicle wall.
Users	Wife, boss, barista

After following John for a couple of hours, you already have an interesting set of brand-related questions to continue validating:

- Should our brand message include a reference to “keeping all your to-dos in the same place” or “making your to-do list accessible”?
- Considering John’s reliance on email, would placing ads on email platforms be an effective communication strategy for our brand?
- Would coffee and a desk generate associations with planning and to-do list creation, and therefore be effective images to build our brand’s visual identity around?
- Given John’s desire to visualize important deadlines in walls, should our brand message focus on screen-paper (online/offline) integration?

The importance of carrying a field guide

Some general guidelines are to make sure that you select the right people, prepare your interview questions beforehand (but be sensitive to open up to others), fill out a reasonably organized field guide, and keep your eye open for behaviors that deviate from the standard. Also, even if you’re researching

buyer personas for a very specific product, make sure that you look at the *whole* experience. You never know what new ideas may come up.

As promised, next is a sample field guide. Miscellaneous questions like “favorite social media platform,” “car make,” and “hair color” might make sense in specific cases (with car or shampoo brands, for example). Take this guide with you, be *efficiently* creative, and feel free to edit or add questions as needed.

SAMPLE FIELD GUIDE

NAME	
AGE	
MARITAL STATUS	
INCOME LEVEL	
LOCATION	
NO. OF CHILDREN	
TO DO LIST	<i>What must he/she accomplish every day, as related to the solution your brand is proposing?</i>
ASPIRATIONS	<i>What are his/her goals, as related to the solution your brand is proposing?</i>
PAINS	<i>What is it that he/she finds difficult to accomplish at the moment, as related to the solution your brand is proposing?</i>
CRITERIA	<i>What makes him/her complete the purchase of an existing solution, similar to the one your brand proposes? How much is he/she willing to pay?</i>
CHANNELS	<i>Which publications is he/she most likely to read? Where would it be smart for us to place our brand message?</i>

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Now that you've interviewed and observed a considerable amount of potential buyers, summarize the patterns you have uncovered in—you

guessed it—your first buyer personas. The main characters in your story. Also known as *the people we’re going after*.

Use the following template to summarize your information:

CUSTOMER PERSONAS

Picture	WHO SHE/HE IS	HIS/HER PAINS	HIS/HER ASPIRATIONS	HIS/HER TO DOS	WHY HE/SHE BUYS	HOW TO REACH HIM/HER
(FICTIONAL) NAME	Gender:	-	-	-	-	-
Occupation:	Income Level:	-	-	-	-	-
Location:	Age:	-	-	-	-	-
(FICTIONAL) NAME	Marital Status:	-	-	-	-	-
Occupation:	Children:	-	-	-	-	-
Location:	Education Level:	-	-	-	-	-
(FICTIONAL) NAME	Gender:	-	-	-	-	-
Occupation:	Income Level:	-	-	-	-	-
Location:	Age:	-	-	-	-	-
(FICTIONAL) NAME	Marital Status:	-	-	-	-	-
Occupation:	Children:	-	-	-	-	-
Location:	Education Level:	-	-	-	-	-

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Personality: Who Are You?

Ever been stuck talking (more like yelling) to a machine when you needed support from an actual human being? That’s how customers feel when your brand personality isn’t there or isn’t coming through. Try this with me: imagine Apple and Microsoft as people. Now think about them going out on a date. If you can sustain their dialogue and picture them for over a minute, both of these brands have done their homework. When *they* tell you stories, you get “human” rather than “machine”—even though (sorry to break your heart) they are essentially machines.

People relate to people, and if your brand feels like “people,” they’ll relate to you, too.

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

Give it a try: use your prospective buyer's name and search for her problems using hashtags like #teacherproblems #ceoproblems #momproblems #teenageproblems #athletereblems. What you'll find is pure gold. We used to *pay* for that kind of insight. Marketers used to (and still do) give people journals where they documented any given experience during their day. Forget journals: this is real-time, real-deal market research.

These are some of the tools that I use the most:

- Topsy
- Twitter Advanced Search
- Quora
- Google Plus
- Instagram
- Flickr

The American Psychological Association has defined personality as the “unique psychological qualities of an individual that influence a variety of characteristic behavior patterns (both overt and covert) across different situations and over time.”^[29] Our personality influences the way we think, behave, and feel with regard to everything that surrounds us. Similarly, brands must react in a marketplace where conditions are uncertain and ever-changing. Creating a flexible, yet strong, brand personality will help us adapt quickly to this environment. Lean brands sail out into the world to discover their customers and can rarely predict the outcome; however, they can always decide how to react to what they find. A brand personality guides us in this agile decision-making process.

For the purposes of this book, we will understand “brand personality” as the humane psychological qualities associated with our brand that dictate its interactions in the marketplace during different situations and over time. By linking your brand with several traits that are traditionally used to describe *human* personalities, you can build a more relatable story that consumers will engage with.

Having followed dozens of startups as they developed sound brand personalities, I have compiled a list of descriptors that can help you create yours. In [Chapter 7](#), you will find out how to measure whether this personality is resonating well with customers and adapt it accordingly. Feel free to include and use other words that apply to your brand. Based on the positioning, promise, personas, and product you've described before, which of these qualities fit your brand best?

BRAND PERSONALITY PROFILE

Adventurous	Classy	Disciplined	Futuristic	Kind	Obstinate	Rebellious	Sociable
Affectionate	Clean	Discreet	Generous	Knowledgeable	Old-fashioned	Refined	Solemn
Agile	Clever	Disruptive	Genle	Laid-back	Optimistic	Reliable	Sophisticated
Agreeable	Coherent	Dramatic	Grumpy	Liberal	Outgoing	Religious	Soulful
Alert	Compassionate	Eager	Handsome	Lively	Outspoken	Reserved	Stable
Altruistic	Competent	Easy-going	Happy	Local	Passionate	Resolute	Strong
Ambitious	Competitive	Eccentric	Hard-working	Logical	Paternal	Resourceful	Studious
Analytical	Confident	Efficient	Helpful	Loud	Patient	Respectful	Subtle
Argumentative	Conservative	Emotional	Hip	Loyal	Patriotic	Responsible	Systematic
Artistic	Consistent	Empathetic	Humble	Masculine	Peaceful	Restless	Tactful
Assertive	Controlling	Energetic	Idealistic	Maternal	Pensive	Rowdy	Talented
Astute	Cooperative	Enterprising	Impetuous	Mature	Picky	Safe	Thoughtful
Balanced	Courageous	Enthusiastic	Impulsive	Methodical	Playful	Sarcastic	Tidy
Brave	Crafty	Exuberant	Incisive	Meticulous	Polite	Sassy	Traditional
Calm	Crazy	Fashionable	Independent	Mischievous	Popular	Scientific	Trustworthy
Candid	Creative	Fearless	Indiscreet	Modern	Practical	Sensitive	Unassuming
Capable	Critical	Feminine	Ingenious	Modest	Precise	Serene	Unconventional
Careless	Curious	Fervent	Innocent	Motivated	Proactive	Serious	Urban
Caring	Deep	Fiery	Innovative	Mysterious	Proficient	Sexy	Versatile
Cautious	Defiant	Flashy	Insightful	Natural	Profound	Sharp	Warm-hearted
Charismatic	Delicate	Flirtatious	Inspiring	Naughty	Proud	Silly	Watchful
Charming	Determined	Formal	Intellectual	Neat	Provincial	Sincere	Wealthy
Chatty	Devoted	Frank	Interesting	Nostalgic	Prudent	Sloppy	Wise
Chic	Diligent	Friendly	Joyful	Nosy	Punctual	Smart	Witty
Child-like	Diplomatic	Funny	Keen	Nurturing	Reassuring	Snobby	Young

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Good, so *what* are we supposed to do with this personality now? How does it shine through? How does it help us make more money? *Why* are we doing this? These are all great questions. Having a clear brand personality will make so many decisions easier that you will regret you hadn't defined one before. For example:

- Wouldn't it be easier to know whom to partner with once you know how your brand feels about life in general?

- Wouldn't it be that much simpler to choose a social media message once you know how your brand is supposed to sound?

Defining our brand personality gives us a better idea of how we should face the customer. It elucidates what is the *voice* telling the story. Keep this idea of brand voice close to heart; based on the personality we just described:

- What would my brand say and how? Along the same lines, how would my brand speak to customers during the different stages of their experience? More on this in the upcoming Product section.
- What does it hate?
- What does it absolutely love?
- What is its favorite drink or meal? Why?
- (We could go on forever, now that we have a personality.)

Consider the following example of a brand personality and how it translates into the brand's voice.

Brand personality	Brand voice	
<i>Young, cool, unique, intelligent, confident, charming, funny, down-to-earth</i>	To express encouragement	<i>"Have a great Monday everyone! Three words about life: it goes on. (Also: Friday will come.) This is what XYZ HQ looks like this morning."</i>
Hates: arrogance, lack of originality, bad music	To express excitement	<i>"We're thrilled to announce our newest feature: XYZ! Check it out and let us know what you think."</i>
Loves: artists, designers, makers, good music	To express an apology	<i>"Sorry, guys. We'll be back soon. Good things take time! In the meantime, here's a song that's keeping us going: XYZ."</i>
Favorite meal: chocolate anything		
Favorite drink: happy-hour mojitos	To express gratitude	<i>"Huge thanks to everyone who came out to our launch party yesterday! It's good to see that everyone survived. Well, almost everyone..."</i>

Coming up next, you will see how this personality comes into play in

different stages of interaction with your customer. Time to speak up!

LEAN BRANDING CASE: MAILCHIMP'S FREDDIE VON CHIMPENHEIMER IV

Meet Freddie von Chimpenheimer IV. You might recognize him as MailChimp's witty little character. Freddie is a clever chimp that becomes your concierge, coach, and friend as you navigate MailChimp's interface. More than serving, he is here to amuse you with unexpected jokes and short pep talks.



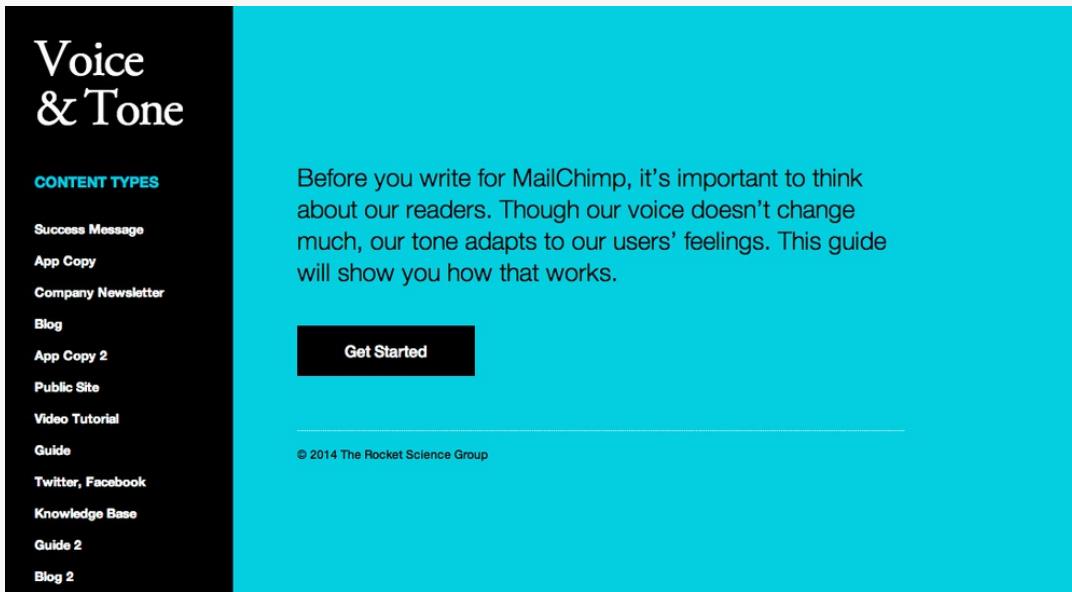
He doesn't sound like a vector cartoon anymore, right? That's because Freddie has a defined personality and voice that encapsulates the MailChimp brand story. Visit www.voiceandtone.com, and you'll find an interactive guide to what this story sounds like.

These are some of the jewels you'll find:

- "Freddie's jokes aren't intended to be useful or educational—they're simply a layer of humor.

Be funny!"

- "Surprise and delight our users here. Catch them off guard in the best way possible."
- "Pat these users on the back for getting a campaign out the door. They're probably feeling happy and relieved—use casual language that encourages those feelings."
- "The app is MailChimp's heart, and tracking is usually the most exciting part for users. Our personality should come through in this step."



Product: What Will You Offer over Time?

Strong brands know that there's much more to it than "the sell." The term *product experience* does a better job at capturing what it is that our brand is really standing for. We're used to thinking that products (and services) are just a sum of features, but taking a closer look at the customer's experience reveals the truth: products are an augmented set of opportunities to add value that includes (of course) tangible features, but also service, visual identity, support, warranties, delivery, installation...the stuff people pay a premium for. The stuff strong brands are made of.

Products shouldn't just work well, they must unfold well.

Using Journey Maps to design your product experience

A useful way to visualize your product experience is to use a *Customer*

Journey Map. These maps display the complete adventure that customers jump on the minute they consume your product. It is important to remember that consumption involves pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages, and consumers will be looking for you all along. A complete Journey Map includes these three stages. The main idea here is that customers are not just looking for value on the spot. These stages are all *brand touchpoints* in which you can add value, and it is essential to recognize what and where they are and how you'll respond to consumers during each of them. Think about a few stages that your own customer would go through as he consumes your product:

Before purchase

Maybe he has to check out a few other options before deciding whether to purchase your brand. What will you do during this stage to make sure that he learns about you? If this is a corporate purchase, does the buyer need someone else's approval? If it isn't, will he need his wife's approval?^[30] Once he learns about you, how will you communicate what makes you different (and worthy of his decision)? ([Chapter 5](#) will discuss communication strategies in depth.)

During purchase

The customer actually pays for your product. Is there something you can say or do to make this process easier or more rewarding? Is there a stimulus that you can provide to make the decision-making process simpler?

After purchase

How does your product interact with the customer after he has purchased it? How does it resolve his initial aspirations? Perhaps your product involves an installation process. Even if it doesn't, consumers want to be able to communicate with you after their purchase and reaffirm that their choice was correct (read the upcoming "Dig Deeper" box to learn more). How will you make the customer feel that his purchase decision was right? If this is a corporate purchase, will other departments resent your

customer's decision? May coworkers dislike the fact that your customer's purchase changed their workflow? What can you say or do to make sure that your product's integration with the customer's routine is seamless?

DIG DEEPER: A WORD ON COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Cognitive dissonance is a term widely used in consumer psychology to refer to what we commonly know as “having mixed feelings” about something. According to psychologist Leon Festinger, who coined the term in the 1950s, we are all looking for something called *internal consistency*. All this means is that we avoid displaying attitudes and opinions that create inconsistency within ourselves. Whenever our attitudes and opinions do conflict, we experience what is known as cognitive dissonance.

Now, this idea is essential in designing a pre- and post-purchase brand experience because consumers often experience periods of doubt, regret, and anxiety after they have acquired a product/service. As customers, we question whether the price reflected the product's quality, or whether the communicated feature set corresponds with the product's *actual* functionalities.

Cognitive dissonance can be dangerous, not only for your long-term relationship with a particular customer, but also for the potential ripple effect that may arise if the dissatisfaction grows. Think about aggressive messages in review platforms that may scare future customers away. Needless to say, brands need to work on preventing and remediating cognitive dissonance.

To prevent cognitive dissonance, answer the following questions:

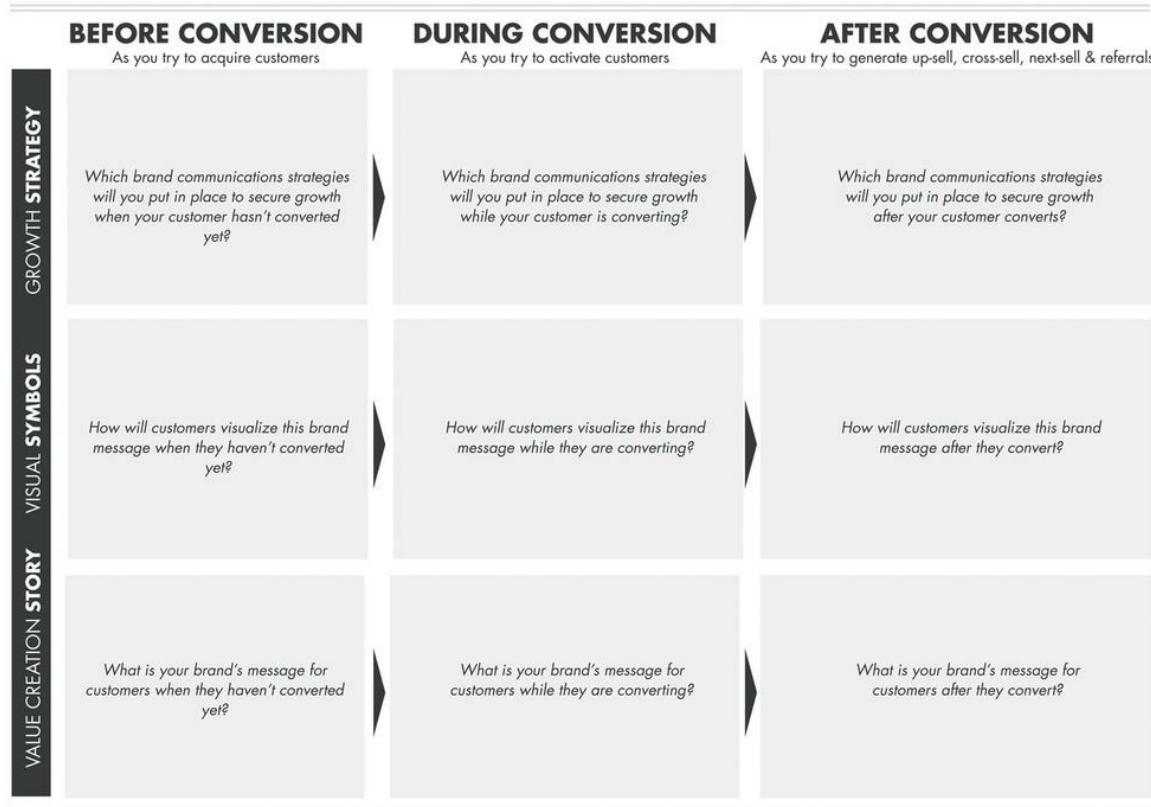
- *Is your brand message honest from the pre-purchase stage?*
- *Are you sharing sufficient and objective information about your product's performance before the sale?*
- *Are you reassuring your customer after closing the sale (post-purchase stage)?*

Please note that “purchase” may not be a relevant conversion action for you. In this case, think about signups, registrations, votes, or whichever act *does* embody conversion in your business model.

Back in [Chapter 1](#) we discussed the importance of understanding that brand and product don't compete. Brand is product, and everything else conforming to the unique story that consumers create when they think of you. Therefore, we can now think of your product experience in terms of all the brand elements that must come together when someone consumes your offer. To make this easier for you, the following Brand Journey Map template includes a series of stages and boxes to fill out as you design the experience that you

are trying to offer.

BRAND JOURNEY MAP



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Mapping the *brand journey* makes visualizing this process easier. I urge you to take a few minutes to draw your own path to identify where and how your brand story will be told.

In each step, try to picture what aspect of your brand experience is interacting with your customer. I understand this might be a little abstract, but check out the next “Inspiration Hack” sidebar to find a few examples of journey steps that would work for a web-based solution.

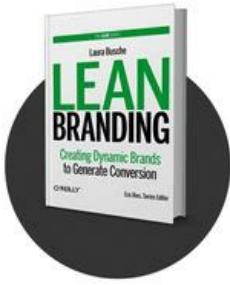
INSPIRATION HACK: BEGINNING YOUR BRAND JOURNEY

Here are some ideas for stages that you can include within your Brand Journey:

- Signup
- Calls to action

- Tutorial to help the customer get started (also known as *onboarding*)
- Referrals
- Typical product use
- Logging out
- Notifications
- Confirmations
- Receiving a periodic email
- Upgrading to a premium version
- Getting help

PRODUCTS
shouldn't just work well,
they must unfold well.



Pricing: How Much Is Your Solution Worth?

At this point, you've created a brand promise and positioning, defined buyer personas, and mapped an engaging product journey infused with an equally appealing brand personality. Good job! Now it's time to reap the rewards.

But just how will you go about figuring out what this reward should be? How will you fix a price that appeals to your buyers and keeps your company's finances healthy? When is it too much and when are you underestimating what your solution is worth to the buyer?

We could spend days discussing pricing strategies from multiple standpoints. There are at least a dozen different pricing models that you can consider putting in place, but we will look at three of the most widely used:

Cost-based pricing

You set a price based on production cost considerations and profit objectives. Every company gauges these production costs differently, but an essential question remains: *How much should we charge for this product or service if it costs us X to produce and we want to earn Y on top of that?*

Value-based pricing

You set a price based on the customer's perception. During this pricing process, you basically figure out how much value your customer places on the product or service that your brand offers. *How much is she willing to pay for this product?*

Competition-based pricing

You set a price for your product or service based on your closest competitors' strategies. When you have little or no competition (in a disruptive category), you can look at substitute products. *How much is my closest competitor charging for a similar product or service? Do I want my price to be at, above, or below theirs?*

More often than not, a brand's pricing strategy is a combination of two or more of the models just presented. For example, a company like Samsung

may concurrently consider production costs, its target customers' willingness to pay, and other manufacturers' strategies when deciding on a price for its products. Other widely used pricing strategies include:

Penetration pricing

Setting a low price to grab a large share of the market when you are launching.

Skimming or “creaming” price strategy

Setting up a high price initially to recover what you have invested in developing the product.

Freemium

Offering one version of your product or service for free and a more advanced version for a fee.

Premium pricing

Setting up a deliberately high price because it allows your brand to appeal to a specific market segment with a certain purchasing power.

Psychological pricing

Setting a price having considered how the actual numbers play a role in a consumer's decision-making process. For example, you may validate that charging \$4.99 instead of \$5.00 helps boost sales. This tactic relies on the idea that customers will (involuntarily) round down and perceive a lower price, which in turn triggers a purchase.

If you decide to use *value-based pricing*, keep in mind your potential buyer's answer to these questions from our Personas section (earlier in this chapter):

Purchase criteria and motivations: What makes him complete the purchase of an existing solution, similar to the one your brand proposes? How much is he willing to pay?

In [Chapter 7](#), when we measure our brand story ingredients, you will learn about a pricing concept called *willingness to pay*. This indicator will allow us

to *approximate* our buyers' ideal price point(s) and approach our brand's pricing from a value-based perspective.

Bringing It All Together: Your Brand Storyboard

At this point, you have built a positioning, promise, personas, personality, product experience, and pricing for your brand. As we approach the next steps in this process, it helps to continuously visualize your entire brand story.

While I worked with tech startup teams from every background imaginable, I noticed that storytelling doesn't come easy for many of us. That's why I designed this simple tool:

BRAND STORYBOARD

Once upon a time...	He/she always...	But always had a problem...	He/she tried to solve it...
But he/she wished that...	Until one day...	Unlike his/her solution, this...	His/her wish came true: to...

By completing each of these scenes, you will be answering some of the key

questions behind powerful brand storytelling. Let's go over some considerations as you fill out the storyboard:

Once upon a time

In this scene, you will describe the buyer personas introduced earlier in this chapter using images or text. Who is the main character in your brand story?

He/she always

Define some of the main tasks that your customer is regularly involved with. What does she do every day? What are her main responsibilities in life and work, as related to the product or service that you offer?

But always had a problem

State the main issue that your customer faces when trying to complete her tasks. What is the unsatisfied need or aspiration in this story?

He/she tried to solve it

If the previous problem is real, your customer is probably already solving it. What are some alternate solutions to the issue at hand? How is your customer managing to partially satisfy this aspiration?

But he/she wished that

Outline the flaws in the solutions your customer is currently using. Despite purchasing these other products or services, your customer is still unsatisfied. What are existing solutions lacking?

Until one day

Describe how your customer will most probably learn about your brand. What happened on the day she first heard about you?

Unlike his/her solution, this

List some of the aspects related to your product experience that set you apart from competitors. How does your offer differ from your customer's current solution?

His/her wish came true, to

Clearly define the aspiration that your brand fulfills. What is your customer's "wish come true"?

Now that you have filled out each of these scenes, consider some of the implications of each of your answers. *Why* do they matter? *How* can we use them? Why are they important for brand building and conversion? The following storyboard provides some thoughts:

ONCE UPON A TIME...	HE/SHE ALWAYS...	BUT ALWAYS HAD A PROBLEM...	HE/SHE TRIED TO SOLVE IT...
<p>In this square we are defining the target audience for all our communications efforts. Advertising, content, and other types of campaigns should be designed and directed to this segment.</p>	<p>These are the times and places where the need that your brand satisfies is most active. They are good spaces for brand placement and advertising.</p>	<p>Pains and aspirations that you must reflect in communications pieces, so that consumers feel identified with your message and it can resonate ("That's me!").</p>	<p>Learn more about these competitors and alternate solutions. Study their flaws and potential improvements. Consumers expect you to differentiate from them by bringing something new to the table.</p>
BUT HE/SHE WISHED THAT...	UNTIL ONE DAY...	UNLIKE HIS/HER SOLUTION...	HIS/HER WISH CAME TRUE: TO...
<p>Explore ways in which you can solve these pending issues in your own product/service. Your competitor's flaws are areas of opportunity. You can address these existing consumer concerns to position your brand as the optimal solution.</p>	<p>In this square you defined different scenarios where consumers first learned about your brand. Was it online? Through a video? By word-of-mouth? These are ideal channels to start sharing your brand story.</p>	<p>Reflect these key differentiators in your brand story, symbols and strategy. Make sure that your core value offer is contained in your brand promise.</p>	<p>Use this fulfilled aspiration in your communications pieces to reinforce your brand's role in the customer's satisfaction. Represent this aspiration in visual symbols like your brand's video and imagery as you see fit.</p>

Recap

As you'll remember from [Chapter 1](#), we are in the business of taking customers from A to B, where A is their position today and B is the place they want to be tomorrow. Building a dynamic brand story helps drive this message home for the consumer. While digital communication channels are important, they are just *tools* to show (what should be) a meaningful brand story.

Many different ingredients are involved in creating your brand story. In this chapter, we introduced six of them: your positioning, promise, personas, personality, product experience, and pricing. A brand's positioning conveys which space you are trying to occupy, the main aspiration that you are trying to satisfy, and an idea of who else is competing for that space. Your brand promise is basically a fun-sized version of your positioning statement, emphasizing on your core value offer. It should answer the question, "What's in it for me?"

Personas are "fake" people with *very real* needs or aspirations that inspire everything our brand is, does, and communicates. By crafting our brand messages around these personas, our story will become more humane. This is important because people relate to people, and if your brand feels like "people," they'll relate to you, too.

Strong brand stories satisfy consumer aspirations with a well-designed, holistic product experience. Products shouldn't just work well, they must *unfold well*. Finally, defining our brand personality gives us a better idea of how we should face the customer. It elucidates the *voice* telling the story.

[25] It is important to make this distinction because, as you've learned before, customers cocreate this positioning with you once your brand is out in the marketplace.

[26] Bob coauthored *The Startup Owner's Manual* (K & S Ranch) with Steve Blank. A serial entrepreneur, he has founded seven startups for two home runs, two basehits, and three tax losses. He has invested in or advised more than a score of startups and teaches customer development at Columbia Business School.

[27] <http://continuuminnovation.com/work/swiffer/>

[28] Bruce Hanington and Bella Martin, *Universal Methods of Design: 100 Ways to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions* (Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2012).

[29] Richard J. Gerrig and Philip G. Zimbardo, *Psychology and Life*, 16th edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002).

[30] These people standing between you and the buyer, affecting the buyer's decision, are known as *gatekeepers*.

Chapter 4. Brand Symbols

The principal role of a logo is to identify, and simplicity is its means... Its effectiveness depends on distinctiveness, visibility, adaptability, memorability, universality, and timelessness.

—Paul Rand^[31]

Books are judged by their cover. This isn't fair to the writer. It isn't optimal for understanding. It isn't even practical for the reader. But, as with most other human pet peeves we don't like, *it is how it is*. Human beings form a first impression of something online within 50 milliseconds.^[32] We are quick to judge, creating rules of thumb about everything that surrounds us based on incomplete evidence. We overlook things, prioritizing what we see visually and mentally according to the needs and aspirations that are active at the moment.

Fortunately, colors, words, images, and their infinite combinations can be used strategically to influence consumer perception. As you remember that brands are not only about graphics, let me warn you that this chapter is entirely about visual power. Hang on tight and open up your mind, number fans.

This chapter will walk you through the creation of some of your brand's visual symbols: a logo, color palette, typography scheme, imagery, stationery, and collateral.

After having built a strong brand story in [Chapter 3](#), you might be skeptical about the need to spend time on your visual identity. I've heard dozens of entrepreneurs dismiss any attention to graphics to "focus on the product." Here's my message to them: *be smarter than that*. Consider this for a few minutes: you're standing in front of investors pitching your new product/company and the first slide pops up. You're thinking nothing is happening unless you're speaking. No mistakes made yet. Blank slate. *Wrong.*

Everything is happening at that point. By the time you open your mouth, these human beings in front of you will have formed die-hard first impressions based on whatever their eyes processed before their ears. This is not the sort of situation where you actually think, “Now, eyes and brain, please put on your judgmental hat and come up with 10 ideas of who this person is and what they offer. You have 50 milliseconds. Go!” This *very* human impression formation happens in the background, in the back of your mind—more specifically, in two regions called the *amygdala* and *posterior cingulate cortex*.^[33] You don’t just query them into action. First impressions are formed so quickly that there’s no possible way for you to command your brain to make them. If this is something you’re interested in, please check Dr. Lindgaard’s studies on first impressions in the upcoming “Dig Deeper” sidebar.

Now think about your buyers—also known as “the people we’re going after,” remember? The ones with the wallets who bring a happy ending to your brand story. These people are forming first impressions about you and your product *all the time*. And unless you literally cage them in a lab and force them to try your product in complete isolation (and not even then!), you might be able to make their first impression be about your *core product*. In all other (nontorturing and legal) market situations, let me warn you:

Consumers are probably making first impressions based on symbols surrounding your core product.

Given how important visual communication cues can be for impression formation, we will tackle both in this and the following chapter. First, we will discuss brand symbols and how to approach them with a lean mindset, and then we will explore brand strategy to empower the spread of your story and symbols avoiding wasting money and time.

DIG DEEPER: ATTENTION WEB DESIGNERS: YOU HAVE 50 MILLISECONDS TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION!

In 2006, four researchers from the Human-Oriented Technology Lab at Carleton University in Canada published a study in which they set out to establish how quickly people formed opinions about a given website’s visual appeal.^[34] In other words, they wanted to know how much time passed before an online user formed an aesthetic judgment about the site.

Lindgaard, Fernandes, Dudek, and Brown performed three different studies in which they exposed participants to web pages for a set amount of time and asked them to rate each page on different dimensions. One of the studies tested what happened when a group of participants was exposed to a site for 500 milliseconds and another group was exposed to the same site for 50 milliseconds. They found that participants' ratings in both time conditions were significantly correlated, suggesting that their opinion about the site's visual appeal didn't change substantially if they saw the site for more than 50 milliseconds.

The researchers concluded that "visual appeal can be assessed within 50 ms, suggesting that web designers have about 50 ms to make a good first impression."

This book gives you the tools to do the work ahead of time to set up your brand for success in its 50 milliseconds.

First Things First: Set Up Your Brand Wall

If you've ever been involved in the creative industry, chances are you know what a *working wall* is. In case you don't, you will not be surprised: a working wall is—you guessed it—a wall where you lay out your work. In our case, this new space in our home or office will become the source of our brand inspiration. Pick an available wall and use a corkboard or whiteboard to pin data and visuals that can inform your brand development process.

I know this sounds a lot like Pinterest. However, the importance of *physically* pinning inspiring clips on a wall is that you will look at them every day in times when *you are not necessarily working*. The gifted multitaskers we think we are, human beings still need time and space for creative thought—and if you've ever felt a strong sense of epiphany (an "aha!" moment) you know that this can happen when you least expect it.

The point of collecting graphics that relate to your product's context, competitors, and customers is to conduct what we call a *visual audit*. We are basically trying to deduct, through examples, what our market's visual language is. What *customers* are used to seeing (and therefore expect), what *competing* brands use to persuade, and what visual cues are found in the *context* of the purchase situation.

Assemble your wall and start pinning. Find similarities and differences. Change the order of things. Every time an idea strikes you, paste it on the wall. Start over if you need to.^[35]

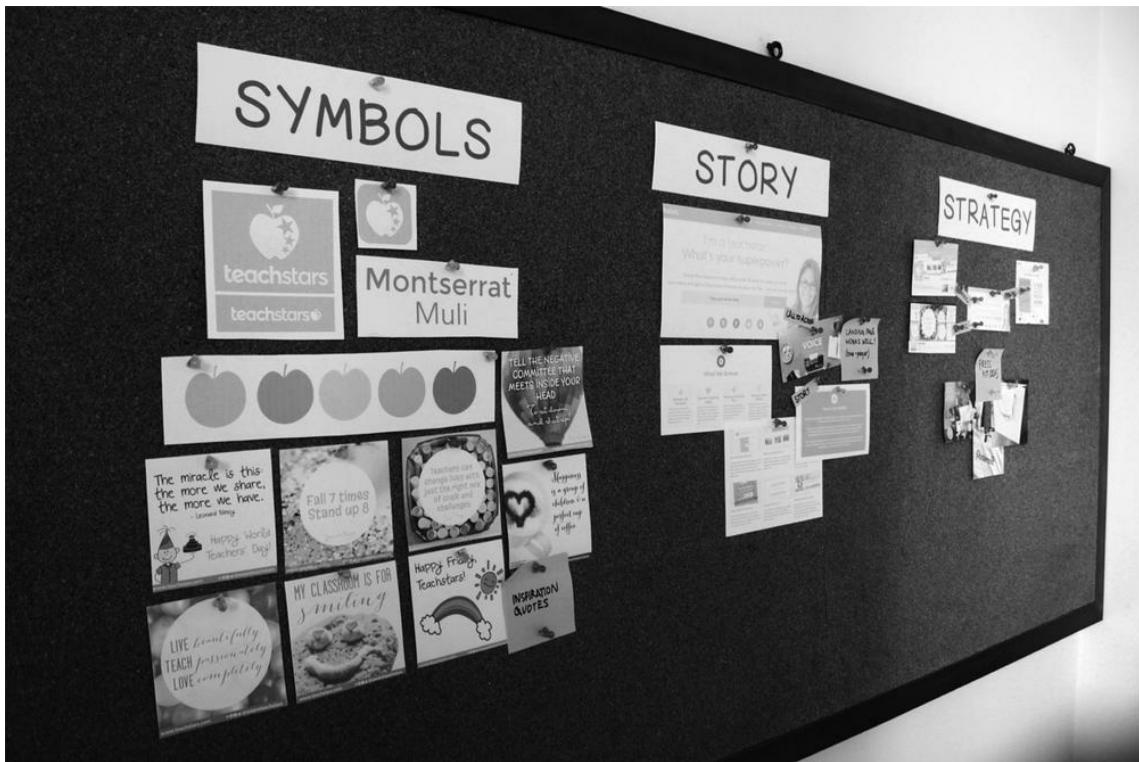
Some ideas for your brand wall:

- Pin everything you came up with in [Chapter 3](#): your brand story.
- Pin your competitors' sales material, logos, color palettes, and imagery.
- Print out screenshots of your competitors' social media profiles.
- Clip a magazine ad that would work for your brand.
- Write taglines and implicit/explicit messages that you find interesting in sticky notes.
- Use masking tape to paste an inspiring piece of packaging that would work for your brand.
- *Definitely* pin any doodles on napkins involved in this process.

Back to Our Recipe: Lean Brand Ingredients

Let's recall our list of lean brand symbol ingredients to learn how to create them, one by one. Remember, these are the *minimal* elements you will need to create a brand experience in the marketplace:

- Logo, color palette, and typography
- Imagery and mockups
- Stationery: the business card
- Collateral: the one-sheet and slide decks



Aside from sight, other senses like hearing and smell have the potential to generate memorable brand symbols. Though this chapter focuses on visual

symbols, if you would like to learn more about how scents and sounds can become symbols that help convey your brand story, read the “Dig Deeper” sidebar at the end of the chapter.

Logo

If the fear of coming up with a name is a phobia, creating a logo is probably stage II of the disease. Whether you are creating it in-house (i.e., someone inside your company is producing it) or you’ve outsourced it to someone else, it seems like creative and business minds speak two entirely different languages, and the end result is often something with a huge “OK, but...” painted all over it.

Actually, aligning business and design is one of the core challenges you will have to face this century anyway, so you might as well get started now.

Rather than an aesthetic pursuit, design has become a strategic business tool to create, add, and communicate value. Companies like Apple and Airbnb have championed a new movement where design escapes from the island where we’ve traditionally secluded it to become part of strategic business planning.

Jonathan Ive, Senior VP of Design at Apple, explained Apple’s integration of design and business in the following terms:

We have always thought of design as being so much more than just the way something looks. It's the whole thing. The way something actually works on so many different levels. Ultimately, of course, design defines so much of our experience. [\[36\]](#)

Similarly, Airbnb cofounder Joe Gebbia explained to Mediabistro how integrating design into its existing business model changed the future of the company:

In the early days of Airbnb, we had a bunch of great listings in New York, but they weren't being booked. We decided to try out taking professional photos of various listings, and putting an "Airbnb Verified" watermark on it... This one small design decision shifted the way our users interact with our product. [\[37\]](#)

Design decisions reflect underlying business strategies. This is precisely why **Chapter 3**, came before **Chapter 4**. Without clear positioning, product, personality, personas, promise, and pricing, we’d be wasting time with visual

symbols. Guessing. Speaking some random dialect nobody else understands. Wasting designers' *very* valuable time. Research and its insights put everyone on the same page and are the key to your being understood by designers (and pretty much everyone else).

Logo design workshop

Ever found it difficult to start brainstorming logo ideas? The following steps will help you get a head start:

1. ***Think about your brand.*** Write your brand's positioning statement on a blank sheet of paper.
2. ***Think about the logo's emotional impact.*** Create a list of adjectives (descriptive words) answering the question: "How do we want this logo to make customers *feel?*" Go beyond basic descriptors like happy, sad, or interested. Explore words that *truly* represent the impact you wish to achieve with this brand: empowered, inspired, curious, challenged, intrigued, excited, professional, proactive, and so on.
3. ***Think about the logo's message and its cognitive impact.*** Create a list of short phrases or words answering the question: "What do we want this logo to make customers *think or think about?*" Again, go beyond obvious ideas like the product or its name. Is there a particular feature that should stand out? Should customers think about overarching topics like creativity, innovation, health, relationships, or happiness?
4. ***Think graphically.*** This step involves mind mapping. Use a blank sheet of paper and draw four circles, using each of the following prompts as titles. Then, go ahead and think of graphic symbols that we would normally associate with each of them. Draw these graphic symbols around each of the circles, and try to generate as many related symbols as you can. To make the process simpler, draw all your symbols in black and white at this point. The more symbols you generate, and the deeper this mind map becomes, you'll start seeing some nonapparent relationships and paving the field for a more robust design:

- **Your brand name:** Consider literal and abstract symbols that are related to the specific words used in your brand name.
 - **The situation in which your brand would be used:** Think about the environment, time, and place where your product or service comes into play. Are there any specific objects, instruments, tools, ingredients, weather conditions, elements of nature, or locations that could help identify your offer in the marketplace?
 - **The problem/need/aspiration that your brand is trying to solve:** Think about the main issues and pain points related to your brand. Is something too expensive, troublesome, or difficult for consumers, and you are here to facilitate it? If so, how could these issues be represented graphically?
 - **The action through which your brand solves this problem:** Write down your core activity as a verb (action word). Do you *store*, *improve*, *save*, *empower*, *inform*, *design*, or *entertain*? Think both about the means used to add value for the customer, as well as the brand personality involved in doing so. Do you inform with *humor*, or entertain with *satire*? Do you store with *friendliness*, or design with *calmness*? Could your brand be portrayed using a character—animal or human—that reflects its personality as it fulfills this activity?
 - **The emotional impact that you are trying to convey:** Rely on your list of adjectives from step 3 to generate visual symbols that reflect the emotions that your brand is trying to produce.
 - **The cognitive impact that you are trying to convey:** Rely on your list of phrases from step 4 to generate visual symbols that reflect the main ideas that your brand is trying to express.
5. **Think typographically.** Now that you've considered graphic symbols, study the possibility of conveying the same ideas using typefaces only.

Is there a font that can express the emotional impact just described? How can words and letters be arranged to transmit these emotions?

6. ***Think about competitors.*** Collect examples of other logos in your industry. Are there any visible patterns or trends? Do you see something you like or dislike?
7. ***Think about aesthetics.*** Look out for a few examples of logo designs that resemble what you would like to achieve with yours. Find specific shapes, color combinations, and typeface treatments that appeal to you.
8. ***Think about applications.*** Where will this logo be used? Consider the different scenarios where this symbol will be visible: icons, price tags, t-shirts, or even airplane wings. It is essential to keep in mind the possible uses for this graphic symbol to be able to design it accordingly.

After this ideation process is complete, you will have a clearer idea of what kind of logo you would like to see and a thoughtful process to discover symbols that are truly relevant to your brand. Following ideation, there are several steps related to execution. The logo still needs to be refined, colorized, and digitized, among other stages that designers are well acquainted with. Should you decide to hire a designer, it will now be much easier for her to understand your intentions. On the other hand, if you decide to execute the logo design in-house, this process will allow you to involve nondesigners in idea generation and create an environment where everyone's input is valid.

If you will be outsourcing your logo design, please take a look at the upcoming section **Why nobody designs something that you actually like**. It gives you a few tips to inform designers about what you really want or need for your brand symbols.

Once your logo has been completed, these are some filter questions that you might want to ask yourself:

- ***Is this logo flexible?*** Would we be able to adapt it to different backgrounds and future brand extensions? Does it lend itself to both a

square treatment (as in many profile pictures) and a rectangular treatment (as in some headers)?

- **Is it simple?** Can it be understood by the average Joe? Is it too intricate to be recognized at a moderate distance? Does it work in black and white?
- **Is it “me”?** Does it convey the brand personality that you created in [Chapter 3](#)? Is it a solemn logo for a hilarious brand, or a playful logo for a serious brand?
- **Is it web-friendly?** Can it be adapted horizontally and vertically? Is there a miniature (stripped down) version that can be used for icons and smaller formats?
- **Is it scalable?** Will it work equally well on a business card and a giant poster?
- **Is it differentiable?** At a glance, will this logo stand out among a sea of options? Consider the places where you need this differentiation to work, such as an app store or store shelf.

[Chapter 8](#) shows some of the ways in which you can test this newly designed logo’s effectiveness. Your intention to convey the emotions and ideas that we just discussed is only one part of the story. The other part is validating whether consumers feel the same way.

Colors

On that same train of thought, either your in-house or external designer (or maybe even you, if this is something you can tackle), must create a set of colors that distinguish your brand in the marketplace. I’ll stress this: *a color palette isn’t ornamental*. It activates deep psychological associations that may trigger or hinder purchase, and will come in handy *every single day* of your product’s existence.

Something you will want to take into account as you build your brand’s

palette is the cultural meaning of color. Different countries attach diverse meanings to color, and they can be related to age, values, ethnicity, religion, and infinitely many other aspects of life. *Crucial* aspects of life. Stuff you don't want to miss. Consider blue: it stands for “corporate and masculine” in the US and “evil” in Malaysia.^[38] Again, differences you *don't* want to miss. As a low-cost alternative, you can also consider *crowdsourcing marketplaces*. Take a look at the guide in the following sidebar to learn more.

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: LOGO DESIGN

In a perfect world, everyone has millions in the bank and is able to afford a top-notch designer to create an amazing logo for a product that hasn't kicked off yet.

Welcome to the startup world. Not everyone is funded, many are struggling to pay rent, maxed-out credit cards are not uncommon, and not every team includes a designer or can hire one right off the bat.

I need you to breathe. Deeply.

There are ways around this. Ways that are cost and time effective. Ways that take advantage of the infinitely many doors opened up by the Internet. *Smart* ways around this.

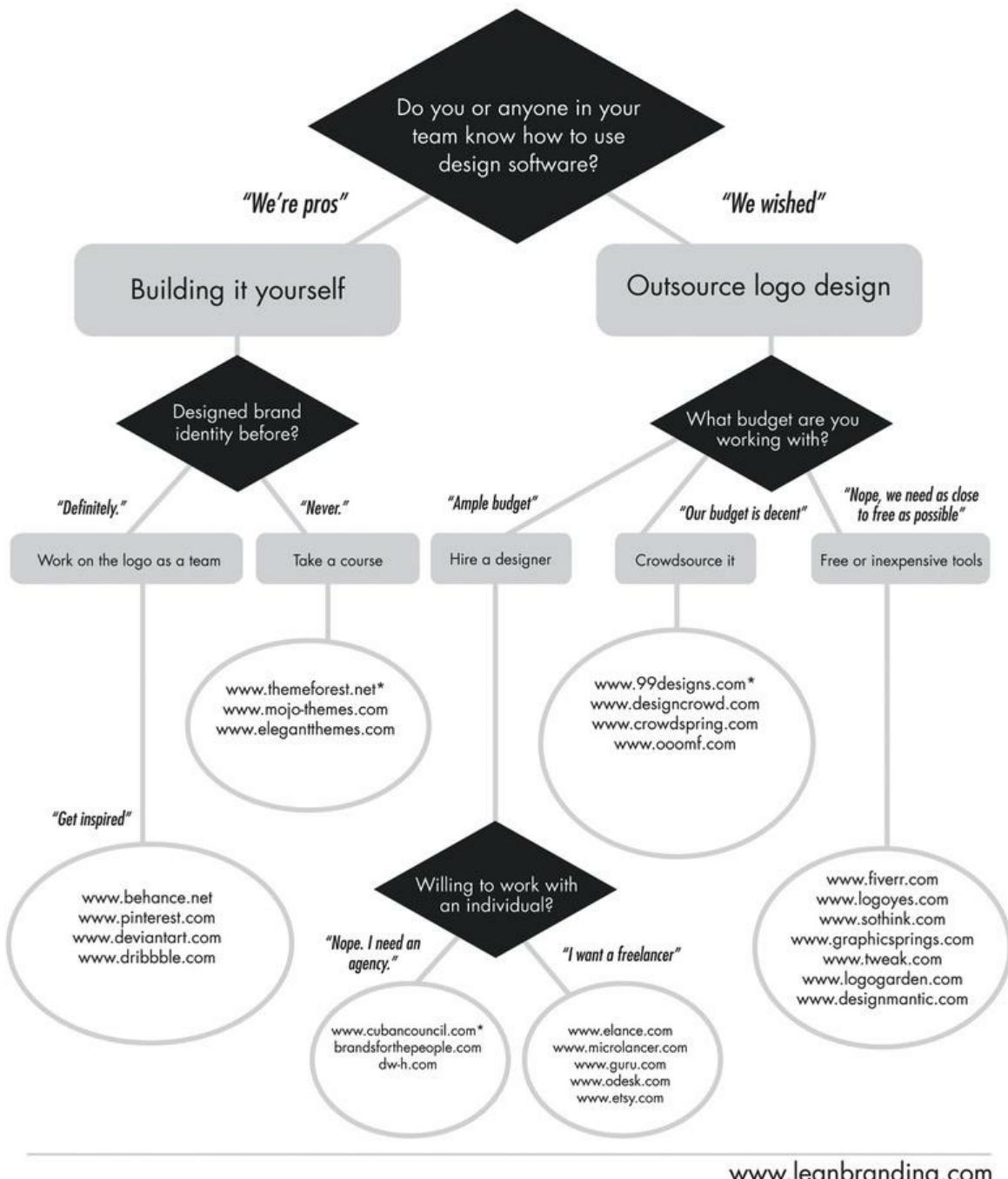
See, there are still many great design agencies around that offer quality brand identity services. You may be able to find one that suits your budget. After all, sitting next to a designer that will create a custom solution for your product is the ideal scenario.

But startups happen, and their scenario is rarely ideal.

Therefore, I have built this handy list of resources (more like hacks) to help you tackle the mission of designing your product's logo.

Answer the questions in this decision diagram on the next page to find out which is the best road for you.

CREATING YOUR LOGO



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Typography

Look at these two statements and think about your reactions to each:

TYPOGRAPHY EXAMPLES

I am a hot new technology product.

TIMES NEW ROMAN

I am a hot new technology product.

MONTSERAT

I'm a stylish brand.

COMIC SANS

I'm a stylish brand.

JOSEFIN SANS

We're all about speed and performance

CLICKER SCRIPT

We're all about speed and performance

CLEMENTE

We sell amazing food

ANDALE MONO

We sell amazing food

GELATO SCRIPT

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Does the first statement make you think this is a high-tech brand? Do you think the second statement would work if we wanted to sell antiques? If your

conclusion was that the first statement looks dated and the second would suit a technology brand best, you've fallen in the typography trap. As long as typography plays with perception in these powerful ways, some of us will remain obsessed with putting it to work for us.

Here are some other examples of how brand personality can come through (or sink) with typefaces:

TYPOGRAPHY EXAMPLES

I am a hot new technology product.

TIMES NEW ROMAN

I am a hot new technology product.

MONTSERAT

I'm a stylish brand.

COMIC SANS

I'm a stylish brand.

JOSEFIN SANS

We're all about speed and performance

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We sell amazing food

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GELATO SCRIPT

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In your opinion, which of those two phrases was more successful at evoking “stylish”? If you went for *Josefin Sans*, the second typeface, you have

instinctively identified some design details that spell out “stylish”: the prolonged ascenders and descenders; its thinner, more delicate weight; and its geometric, more sophisticated shape.

TYPOGRAPHY EXAMPLES

I am a hot new technology product.

TIMES NEW ROMAN

I am a hot new technology product.

MONTSERAT

I'm a stylish brand.

COMIC SANS

I'm a stylish brand.

JOSEFIN SANS

We're all about speed and performance

CLICKER SCRIPT

We're all about speed and performance

CLEMENTE

We sell amazing food

ANDALE MONO

We sell amazing food

GELATO SCRIPT

Consider the following example:

TYPOGRAPHY EXAMPLES

I am a hot new technology product.

TIMES NEW ROMAN

I am a hot new technology product.

MONTSERAT

I'm a stylish brand.

COMIC SANS

I'm a stylish brand.

JOSEFIN SANS

We're all about speed and performance

CLICKER SCRIPT

We're all about speed and performance

CLEMENTE

We sell amazing food

ANDALE MONO

We sell amazing food

GELATO SCRIPT

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When you defined your brand personality in the previous chapter, you

actually built a resource that makes selecting logos, color, and typography 100 times easier. You just saw why.

Feel ready to explore typefaces that would work for your product on your own? Check out the following tutorial to learn how Google Fonts can make this easier. To get started, visit <http://www.google.com/fonts>.

USING GOOGLE FONTS

A screenshot of the Google Fonts website. The top navigation bar includes links for 'More scripts', 'About', 'Analytics', and 'New to Google Fonts?'. Below the navigation are four preview modes: 'Word' (selected), 'Sentence', 'Paragraph', and 'Poster'. A preview text input field contains 'Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the evil Queen and Jack.', with a dropdown menu showing 'Normal 400' and a font style 'Kavoon, 1 Style by Viktoriya Grabowska'. To the right are 'Add to Collection' and 'Edit' buttons. On the left, there are 'Filters' (All categories, Thickness, Slant, Width, Reset all filters/search), 'Script' (Latin selected), 'Styles' (Show all styles), and a 'Collection' section (0 font families). At the bottom of the page are 'Choose', 'Review', and 'Use' buttons.

1. Filter by category: Select between fonts with serifs (small lines on the ends of strokes), without serifs (sans-serif), display or handwriting.
2. Filter by thickness: Choose how thin-thick you want your font to be.
3. Filter by slant: Choose how slanted you want your font to look. Slanted means bent. Like this.
4. Filter by width: Decide if you want a narrow or wide font. This is narrow and this is wide.
5. Show me how it looks as a word: Google will display fonts as words. Gives you an idea of how they look like for headlines and logos.
6. Show me how it looks as a sentence: Google will display fonts as sentences.
7. Show me how it looks as a paragraph: Google will display fonts as paragraphs. Choose this if you want to find a font to use in large amounts of copy.
8. Show me how it looks as a poster: Google will create a poster with each font's name.
9. Preview text: Type a sample text to experiment how your brand name would look like with different fonts.
10. Font size: Choose a size for your preview text.
11. Sort fonts by: Decide whether you want to sort fonts by their name (alphabetical), how new they are (date added), how many options they give you (number of styles each has), how trendy they are at the moment (trending) or how many people have downloaded them (popularity).
12. Quick use: You just need this one font. Click here and you'll jump right into a screen where you can download it or insert it in your site.
13. I need to see the specimen: If you know what a type specimen is, you're good to go. For the rest of us, it's the complete set of characters that each font offers.
14. Add to Collection: Google understands that you might need more than one font, so every time you click here, your new fonts will be added to your "collection" for download & use.
15. Choose: This is the first step in using the Google Fonts directory. You'll just add the fonts that you like to your collection.
16. Review: Second step in the process. Google will show you the fonts that you've added to your collection next to each other so that you can decide if they are exactly what you need and remove/add others as necessary.
17. Use: Third step. Google lets you download your entire font collection and/or insert them via your site's code if all you want is to use them on the web.

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Why nobody designs something that you actually like

If you've asked someone to create a logo, color palette, and/or typography before and hated what he did, chances are you failed, too. Did you give him the information about your brand that would inform every design choice?

We like to call this "information" a *brief*. For the purposes of Lean Branding, here's what our brief will look like:

- Attach the positioning, product, personality, personas, promise, and pricing you did in [Chapter 3](#).
- Make a list of the items that you need delivered: logo, typography, color palette, and so on. Look at the brand symbol ingredient list in this chapter to get ideas.
- Show him three examples of designs you hate and three that you love.
- (The End.)

See? Brief. Hand this information to your in-house or external designer and you've basically given him no-fail instructions as to what really works for your brand. You should be getting significantly better—if not perfect right off the bat—proposals.

DESIGN BRIEF TEMPLATE

ABOUT US

Here's who we are

BRAND PERSONALITY

Here's what we offer, over time

PRODUCT

Here's how we're useful to people

BRAND POSITIONING

Short & sweet, here's what we promise to do for people

BRAND PROMISE

ABOUT OUR CUSTOMERS

Here's who we're selling to

PERSONAS

ABOUT YOUR TASK

This is what we need from you:

Logo
 Color Palette

Typography
 Imagery

Stationery: Business Card
 Collateral: One-sheet

Slide Deck
 Something else

These are three things we'd love to see:

...and three things we'd hate to see:

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Imagery and Mockups

Now you have the tools with which to create your logo, color palette, and

typography. Human beings, though, need to see your brand in context to understand what it can do for them. (Remember? *Taking them from point A to B where B is whom they aspire to be.*) So now we must find ways to illustrate this point B: scenery that shows them this “aspirational place” they’re looking for.

Basically our task here is to put our product in context, illustrating the brand experience. Are you building an app? Where will people use it, to do what, and surrounded by whom? Is your product actually a combination of product and service? Who’s delivering the service, in what type of environment, and how do people react when they get it?

I’ll use a personal example here. I own (and often *simultaneously* use) a laptop, a tablet, and a smartphone. An ereader didn’t really seem like a necessary purchase, since all of my devices could already access ebooks and every day a new app comes out to make it even easier. But then this suddenly hit me: a series of Kindle videos with young women that looked just like me reading books on hammocks, planes...and the beach. Those were *my places*. And yet there they were, reading comfortably and in complete absorption because, guess what, there were no obnoxious app notifications popping up. No sunlight glare on the screen, no need to carry chargers around, no other purpose but reading. *Reading beautifully*. Amazon made its sale then and there. The right imagery *sold me* Kindle.

Here are some basic brand images that you will want to have. Look out for the brand imagery cheatsheet that follows:

- Product images/mockups
- Images of consumers using your product
- Images of consumers sharing your product with others
- An image for your email signature
- A tiny icon to be displayed next to your URL (favicon)
- Social media assets in different sizes:

- Square thumbnails for profile pictures
- Wide rectangles for cover pictures

LEAN BRAND IMAGERY CHEATSHEET

SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE PICTURE At least 200x200px	LINKEDIN COMPANY COVER 646 x 220px FACEBOOK PAGE COVER 851 x 315px GOOGLE+ PAGE COVER 1080 x 608px TWITTER HEADER 1500 x 500px YOUTUBE CHANNEL COVER 2560 x 1440px
VERTICAL LOGO VERSION 1. Vector file 2. JPG, PNG, TIF: At least 600px width in 300dpi	HORIZONTAL LOGO VERSION 1. Vector file 2. JPG, PNG, TIF: At least 600px height in 300dpi
ICON 32x32px PNG, GIF OR ICO	EMAIL SIGNATURE IMAGE JPG, PNG: aprox. 50px height in 300dpi
HORIZONTAL PRODUCT MOCKUPS JPG, PNG, TIF: At least 1000px height in 300dpi	VERTICAL PRODUCT MOCKUPS JPG, PNG, TIF: At least 1000px height in 300dpi

Stationery: The Business Card

Although brand stationery can include dozens of different pieces (think letterhead, envelopes, folders, and the like), we will be looking at its most essential piece: the business card.

I can't overemphasize the importance of a well-thought-out business card. Remember when we discussed first impressions at the beginning of this chapter? Business cards can consolidate first impressions with prospective buyers, investors, press partners, and employees.

People store dozens, sometimes hundreds, of business cards in obscure drawers. Best scenario: they store them in some sort of binder. In either case, I think you can see the importance of having yours stand out. I've seen people close deals with no offices, home offices, mature products, minimum viable products, thousands of customers, zero customers, huge teams, no team...but they all had business cards.

Though creativity is encouraged, here are some components that all business cards must have:

- Brand logo (with visible name)
- Brand promise (tagline)
- Name
- Title/position
- Address
- Phone number and/or fax
- Email address
- Website URL
- Optional: Skype, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media profiles.



Collateral: One-Sheets and Slide Decks

Collateral is the material that we use to present our brand to the world. However, unlike with advertising, we use collateral to appeal to *specific* people we're interested in. Think about the press, investors, employees, and particular buyers that grant you private spaces to meet. First step: you hand them your brand new business card. Second step: we're going to need to leave a lasting impression with something else.

Don't get me wrong: this "something else" obviously involves a great product. It is no secret that the press, investors, and buyers will want to try your product as a part of their decision to feature, finance, or buy it. People will weigh the importance of each product feature differently. They will ask different questions based on their unique previous knowledge. Their varied aspirations will impact the way they understand what your product can do. But one thing is for sure: *every single one of them is heavily influenced by visual power.*

So, I'll just stress this differently now:

A great product deserves equally great collateral that does it justice.

We will tackle two of the most time- and cost-effective collateral pieces: one-sheets and slide decks. These two will get you through most of the meetings where your new product will face initial scrutiny.

One-sheets

Let's face it: full, undivided attention is just something we don't get from anyone anymore. This is precisely why bullet points, short videos, gifs, and infographics are all the rage today.

Don't expect your investors, the press, or buyers to behave differently. Though they might be genuinely interested in what you have to offer, your sales material wouldn't be smart if it assumed that they have plenty of time for it.

So, being realistic, a one-sheet is your best bet to capture your listeners' attention and convey your brand story—before they sigh and look away.

I'm not saying you shouldn't eventually prepare a longer brochure, portfolio, catalog, or whatever else you need to sell your brand. What is clear, though, is that upon initial approximation, people don't want or need to dive into bible-long sales material.

One-sheets should inform your listeners about your brand story without overwhelming them. Something along the lines of "Hello, my product's name is X. Here's what it looks like. Here's why it is essential. Here's what I need you to do now. This is why I'm credible. Let's stay in touch." Let's go over each component:

"Hello, my product's name is" section

Include the name of your product and brand promise. We created both of these back in [Chapter 3](#).

"Here's what it looks like" section

Include one or two images of the product in use. Here's where our imagery work in [Chapter 4](#) starts to pay off. Select one or two images that show your core product feature (i.e., the *one* thing you are best at) in

context.

“Here’s what I offer and why this product is essential” section

Explain what the product does and offers. Use the positioning statement template you created back in [Chapter 3](#). Change the wording and move words around if needed. Then, make sure you outline a short list of features that differentiate your product from that of competitors.

“Here’s what I need you to do now” section

This is also known as a [call to action](#). (“Why am I reading this again?”) Begin with your goal in mind. What is the recipient supposed to do now? Email you to ask for a quote? Download your app *immediately*? Visit some website where she can subscribe to your updates? I recommend avoiding fancy jargon in general, but your call to action is the *one* place where you’ll be particularly thankful you scrapped it. *All of it*. Just to make sure, please ask an elementary student if he knows *exactly* what to do next. Be careful not to have several calls to action that compete against one another for importance.

“This is why I’m credible” section

Use testimonials, institutional partnerships, press coverage, awards, and any other credentials you consider important to validate your claim that this product is *absolutely* essential and must be purchased *now*. New brands, like the one we’re building, need to display all the credibility they can find (legally and ethically) to get a head start in such a crowded marketplace.

“Let’s stay in touch” section

Share your contact information. Include your phone number, email, and any other channel that the reader can use to communicate with you. Depending on whom you’re handing this one-sheet to, you will want these channels to be as direct as possible. Meaning: give people like

investors your personal email and mobile phone number. Cut out machines and email redirects as much as you can—unless you can afford to put financing or media coverage on hold. (Can someone actually do that?)



This real estate one-sheet template includes each of the components that we just mentioned: the product's name, images to show what it looks like, its core features, a clear call to action ("Call Today"), a credibility indicator ("Certified Agent"), and direct contact information.

Use the following template to speed up your one-sheet creation process.

ONE-SHEET TEMPLATE

Brand name and logo

Here's what I offer

Here's what my product looks like

Here's what I need you to do now

This is why we're credible

Here's how you can contact me

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Slide decks

Along the same lines, brand presentations often require some sort of visual

aid that captures the audience's (extremely divided!) attention. This is where a well-thought-out slide deck can make the difference. Fortunately, the brand story and brand symbols you've created so far are everything you will need to create a meaningful, engaging slide deck to introduce your brand.

These are some of the occasions in which your slide deck will come in handy:

- Investor meetings
- Big client meetings
- Press conferences or meetings
- Team meetings

To download a slide deck template that you can modify, visit [*www.leanbranding.com/resources*](http://www.leanbranding.com/resources).



Delivering a pitch can be a defining moment in an entrepreneur's journey. Luckily, most scenarios let you use visual aids to tell your story. This is where the power of visual symbols comes into play. In this image, a young entrepreneur in the Apps.co program presents her online education solution at a Demo Day.

DIG DEEPER: SCENT, SOUND, AND BEYOND

Custom sounds and scents can build lasting associations with your brand. Though companies have been using these resources to create a distinct identity for centuries, Martin Lindstrom has recently led a movement to analyze the advantages of something that he has called [sensory branding](#).

The results of Lindstrom's five-year Project Brand Sense study, which included "hundreds of researchers and thousands of consumers in four continents," show that using scents, sounds, and textures to position a brand can create long-lasting, magnetic connection with customers.^[39]

Their findings suggest that "brands with sensory depth were particularly strong, with clearly

defined, globally understood, and distinctive brand identities, not to mention relevant and aspirational brand values.”^[40]

To explore the possibility of including scent and sound as part of your brand identity, think about the following questions:

- Is there a way for you to integrate a custom scent into your current brand presence? If there isn’t, imagine having to open a retail store to sell your product or service: what would it smell like?
- Is there a way for you to integrate a custom sound into your current brand presence? Which assets could incorporate this sound? Think about brand videos, online sites, and your user interface, among others.

Recap

This chapter introduced different ways to build your brand’s visual symbols. Six essential brand ingredients were discussed: logo, color palette, typography, imagery, stationery, and collateral.

Colors, words, images, and their infinite combinations can be used strategically to influence consumer perception. A brand’s color palette isn’t ornamental. It activates deep psychological associations that may trigger or hinder purchase, and will come in handy every single day of your product’s existence. Consumers often (if not always) make first impressions based on visual symbols surrounding your core product. Imagery is a strategic business resource because human beings need to see your brand in context to understand what it can do for them.

Visual pieces like business cards and sales collateral are key in generating first impressions about your brand. Business cards can give you a head start with prospective buyers, investors, press partners, and employees. Similarly, well-designed sales collateral like one-sheets and slide decks can make the difference in the midst of a negotiation. A great product deserves equally great collateral that does it justice.

^[31] Paul Rand (1993), *Design, Form, and Chaos*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

^[32] Gitte Lindgaard et al., “Attention Web Designers: You have 50 Milliseconds to Make a Good First

impression,” *Behaviour and Information Technology* 25, no. 2 (2006): 115–126.

[33] Daniela Schiller et al. (2009) “A Neural Mechanism of First Impressions,” *Nature Neuroscience*, 12, 4, 508–514.

[34] Gitte Lindgaard et al., “Attention Web Designers: You Have 50 Milliseconds to Make a Good First Impression,” *Behaviour and Information Technology* 25, no. 2 (2006): 115–126.

[35] For templates and tips to go about doing this, take a look at my article for *Smashing Magazine*: “Up On The Wall: How Working Walls Unlock Creative Insight,” <http://bit.ly/1lCJG6n>.

[36] Apple Worldwide Developers Conference, 2013.

[37] Stephanie Murg, “Seven Questions for Airbnb Co-Founder Joe Gebbia,” Mediabistro, August 30, 2012, <http://bit.ly/1kI4WHw>.

[38] Mubeen M. Aslam, “Are You Selling the Right Colour? A Cross-Cultural Review of Colour as a Marketing Cue,” *Journal of Marketing Communications* 12, no. 1 (2006): 15–30.

[39] Martin Lindstrom, *Brand Sense: Sensory Secrets Behind the Stuff We Buy* (New York: Free Press, 2010).

[40] Ibid.

Chapter 5. Brand Strategy

It's *showtime*. You'll be happy to know that we haven't been spending the last few chapters creating a story and symbols only to keep them to ourselves. Ready to hit the marketplace? **Chapter 5** is all about reaching out, engaging, and converting. Ears and eyes, hearts and minds, and—yes—wallets.

Brand communications are not about explain-time, justify-time, defend-time...blah-time. Please remember to keep the idea of *showtime* close to heart.

The tools you will see throughout this chapter—videos, images, web content, review systems, and partnerships, among others—are all geared toward *showing* what your brand has to offer. Every time you sit down to think about how you'll communicate, please ask yourself one question:

Am I showing or telling?

The idea of “showing, not telling” will *constantly* save you and your brand, and I will show you how throughout this chapter. (I will *show*, see?)

Here's the thing with strategies: they might work like a charm for some brands and do nothing for others. It's important for you to keep in mind that you may have to tweak the recipe ingredients I will be introducing. How do you go about tweaking, you ask? **Chapter 7** will help us determine whether and how each of these ingredients is working for your brand.

At the beginning of **Part II**, I introduced the Lean Branding recipe with a list of 25 components that we would build in the following chapters. It is now time to learn how to build the ingredients for your brand communications strategy. Although there is no single list of communication tactics that will work for every brand, here are the ingredients that we will build in the following pages:

- Social media marketing

- Landing pages
- Search engine optimization
- Content marketing: blogging
- Paid advertising
- Email list
- Video
- Review systems
- Media relations
- Point-of-purchase optimization
- Partnerships

Throughout this chapter, I will demystify these tactics and help you succeed at communicating your brand painlessly. As you can imagine, there are thousands of tools available to build each of these components, and new features come out almost every day. This book will show you the tools that I've seen are 1) most effective for conversion, 2) time and cost efficient, and 3) accessible at the moment. You can also subscribe for updates at www.leanbranding.com to learn about new tools and features as they come out.

Let's get started.

Social Media Marketing

There are hundreds of books dedicated to using social media for business. There are a hundred more for *each* social media platform as it relates to business. Add those books to the millions of blog posts (Google references over 370 million hits for “social media marketing”), and you can already see

where this is going. Social media is hot right now, everyone is trying to jump in, and everyone also seems to know how it's done.

A word on social media: all human beings are biologically “wired” to participate in social interactions. When we take those interactions online, it often feels “natural,” and new platform features have certainly made it even more so. We feel confident; *we've got this*. However, we must proceed cautiously with brands. Since we are not representing ourselves, but the brand personality (which we built in [Chapter 3](#)), social media marketing is more of a strategic business communication channel than a spontaneous conversation.

Whenever your brand communicates a message through its online or offline presence, it is clear to the audience that you are not just representing yourself. At the very least, you are speaking for the product, the team that created it, and the team that continues to work on it. The tone and content of your message must reflect this.

That being said, of course brands can (and are expected to) be spontaneous and lean as they respond to current events and changes in their context. *That's the whole point of this book.* But the way you, as an individual, proceed in social media is entirely different from the way your (product's) brand will. Think of this as an acting job.

Personal brands, of course, are an exception to this idea. They should reflect your unique, personal voice and respond to what you—as an individual—would react to. Something you need to watch out for is that *natural does not mean raw*. Personal does not mean “I'll post whatever I feel like.” Like product brands, personal brands should be handled with *caution, consistency*, and *concision*, and offer *convenience*. This chapter will show you how it's done and what types of business benefits it can bring.

I always get six questions during social media marketing workshops, which I will address here for you:

- Why should we post?
- Who should post?
- What should we post?

- Where should we post?
- How should we post?
- When should we post?

Why Should We Post?

Four in 10 social media users have purchased an item online or in-store after sharing or favoriting it on Twitter, Facebook, or Pinterest. VisionCritical exposed this and many other insights in a 2013 report called “From Social to Sale.”^[41]

Let’s consider the practical implications of this idea: brands publish their products in social networks and cut through otherwise personal conversations between potential buyers. Common sense would say “interruption,” but done properly this intermission may well be read as “convenience.” Interruption versus convenience is the ultimate social media struggle. Am I interrupting or creating convenience?

In a nutshell: we should post because it is a natural step to purchase.

Who Should Post?

Who should speak for your brand in social media? We can all agree that representing your voice is a serious endeavor. Accordingly, one of the most important decisions you’ll have to make is whether you will manage your social networks in-house or outsource this service. At least at the beginning, you will learn much more from your audience by completing this function in-house. This is not to say that you can’t hire agencies or freelancers to generate an overarching strategy or digital assets like infographics, images, and videos. You should, if you can. The main point here is:

Everyone in your company should keep their social media ears and eyes open.

Think about the possibilities: would you pass on a chance to listen to your customers’ voices directly, when you are just *starting* to know them? It is definitely in your team’s best interest to find a strategic way to delegate

social media publishing.

Most people will instantly assume that Marketing should be in charge of handling social media. Others will argue that it is PR, Sales, Customer Service...even the CEO himself. People: nobody inside your company is supposed to *own* social media. Actually, there are many scenarios where your brand could benefit when several departments tackle different types of messages.

The upcoming section **How Should We Post?** will show you how several members of your team can participate simultaneously in the social media conversation.

That being said, someone inside your company has to lead your social media efforts and be held responsible for results. I understand your company may be too small to have access to every single one of these types of employees, but here are some ideas:

- Your marketing manager.
- A customer service representative.
- Your PR manager.
- Your—this is going to sound obvious—social media manager. In the past, we didn't have professionals trained in social media management. Nowadays, though, there are many graduate degrees in this field, and, if your budget allows, hiring an expert will make a difference.
- You. If yours is a team of one, we're going to have to work with what we have. Read on and get ready to hustle.

What Should We Post?

The single most important question in the business universe is probably *So what?* People don't like (or deserve) messages to be thrown at them. Brand conversations should be human conversations, and this idea plays a role in the way we address our social media followers.

Every time you are staring at a potential social media post, consider whether it *surpasses* the following standards. These standards are related to maintaining your unique brand voice and values, and can be adapted to suit your specific needs. The following are (nonprescriptive) examples from fictional and real brand tweets to show you how to work with each of the standards in your social media messages.

Standard	Avoid saying	Avoid saying	Here's why
Are we being cautious? Does this post offend any brand or individual? Does it give the right credits to original sources? Is the language appropriate for the audience?		<p>“Relax, everybody. There was a stupid technical glitch on our ‘Falling Man’ story and it was fixed ASAP. We’re sorry for the confusion.”</p> <p><i>Esquire Magazine (@Esquiremag)</i> September 11, 2013</p>	“Stupid technical glitch” is definitely not apologetic, and the language might be offensive for some audiences. As a matter of fact, it was. Thousands of users criticized <i>Esquire</i> ’s tweet and judged it as insensitive and arrogant.
Are we being consistent? Does this sound like an entirely different brand talking? Does this post directly contradict something we’ve stood up for in the past? Will it contradict something we might need to stand up for in the (near) future?		<p>“Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just Kidding. I’m White!”</p> <p>Justine Sacco (@justinesacco) December 20, 2013</p>	As it turns out, this tweet came from a PR executive for a major US media company. Her tweet was not only completely offensive, but went against the values that the company’s brand champions. The company made that clear and fired her after the incident.
Is it concise? Is this short and sweet enough to be read and picked up on by someone who is on a rush (as most social media users are)? Is the headline revealing without being too long or giving out too much?		<p>“We just rolled out a new feature that integrates your Photolic photo albums with Evernote’s API to facilitate image storage in real time. This feature is available in the 5.2 release.”</p>	The message is too long and convoluted for final users. Think of better word choices and shorten it into something like: “Our new Evernote integration lets you store Photolic pics in your notebooks—check it out here!”

<p>Is this convenient to my audience? What's the big So what? Does this post create any utility for potential buyers? Is it helping them in any way? Although facilitating purchase is our goal, making someone laugh also counts. Read the upcoming note on humor to use it the smart way.</p>	<p>"Did you know that today is International Teacher's Day?"</p>	<p>Really? And how is that helping me at all? Engage your followers by adding value with something like: "Here are 10 quotes to make your Teacher's Day extra inspiring [link] #worldteachersday"</p>
<p>Is it shareable? Not every single one of your messages has to spread virally, but make sure that the utility we just discussed (is this convenient to my audience?) is alive and well in every post. When content breaks through the clutter and is interesting enough to share, we are gaining natural (also known as <i>organic</i>) exposure.</p>	<p>"New infographic: Our Company's Global Economic Impact in 2013 [link]"</p>	<p>Your infographic may have taken hours to design, but if you don't tell users how it is worth their time it will vanish into thin, social media air. Now here's the real, successful tweet crafted by @Airbnb: "[Infographic] Curious about Airbnb's global economic impact? So were we. Here's what we found [link] #collcons." (March 24, 2014.)</p>
<p>Are we mixing it up with media formats? With so many exciting multimedia tools out there, are you sticking to plain-old text posts? Try to mix it up and use video, pictures, songs, and any of their engaging combinations.</p>	<p>"Our new Chicago headquarters are amazing. We're moving in today."</p>	<p>Do more showing and less telling. This is a great example of a situation where you can combine text and image/video to increase engagement: "Meet our brand-new Chicago headquarters: [image or video]."</p>

Once you are through with these questions and the post is good to go, there are infinitely many types of content that you can publish. The following list will give you a few of the most common and effective kinds of social media posts. *Innovation requires inspiration:*

- An *infographic* sharing information that your audience deems important or useful.

- An *image* of your product next to a tempting headline that triggers purchase.



Ford Mustang shared Concept and Muscle Car's photo.
August 23, 2013



Red. Hot. Mustang.

1967 Shelby GT 500 — with Marshall Duncan and 15 others.



Like · Comment · Share

63,060 928 6,187 Shares

- **A link to interesting (and useful!) content published on your website or blog.** Read the upcoming section on blogging to find out more about how this strategy can help you convert customers.
- **A link to useful content published on someone else's website/blog.** There are several tools that can help you keep up to date with emerging content related to your brand's industry. Try Google Alerts or Feedly Search to receive new posts related to your field every time they are published. For instance, you could monitor the appearance of the terms *time* and *management* in new posts to discover relevant content for your calendar

app brand.

- **An image of an existing customer using your product—and enjoying it.** This could be any type of customer, but (the right type of) celebrity can be a great source of credibility. Please don't piggyback on a trainwreck.
- **An open question to your audience**, asking about desired product features and existing needs.
- **Video** showing your brand's functional or emotional benefits
- **Business milestones.** Have you reached a certain number of users, followers, employees, or customers? Did you just move to a new office? Did you receive financing?
- **Sneak peeks.** Make your followers feel like insiders and show them how your brand experience is created from scratch—without giving away your secret sauce. The idea is to highlight quality processes that show that you know what you are doing, you should be trusted, and your product can (and must) be purchased. Is there a strong professional on your team? Do you meet to brainstorm and improve your product every week? Is there anything special about your office/culture/location? There should be! Karl Lagerfield said it well: “Don’t overact the story of your name. Overact the story of your work.”
- **Contests/prizes/free trials/giveaways.** Most human beings will agree that *free* is a pretty attractive word. It is the universal hook for attention, and if well implemented it can garner attention and conversion for your brand. Make sure not to overwhelm or trick your followers: keeping your brand contests legal and nonspammy is a prerequisite for success.
- **Posts highlighting important (and brand-relevant) dates.** If you sell turkey, you want to use Thanksgiving. If you sell a calendar app, you want to use New Year’s Eve. On that same note, there are special dates almost every day of the year. Sites like *daysoftheyear.com*, *holidayinsights.com*,

and *checkiday.com* provide a daily list of holidays to watch out for.

- **Inspirational quotes that are related to your brand story.** This is why our work in **Chapter 3** was so important. Brands with no clarity about where they're coming from have terrible issues figuring out where they're going. Back in **Chapter 3** we established a list of personality traits and a solid brand promise that relate to life values. When users read your posts about these values and are inspired by them, posts get shared. When posts get shared, you'll reach more eyes. When you reach more eyes, your chances of converting are higher. We can all agree that no one can buy from you unless they've seen you, right?
- **Humor.** You can play with existing customer pains and display them humorously to activate these needs. Think about someone who is failing at something that your brand can solve. Now consider the funny side of the situation and share a laugh with your followers while triggering purchase.

New, engaging types of content are emerging as you read this. To stay on top of new content marketing trends, keep researching best practices in your industry. Here are some ideas to facilitate your research:

- Follow top brands in your sector and take note of what they are doing to engage followers and lead them down a conversion path.
- Read up on social media case studies where successful strategies are explained.
- Review award-winning brand content strategies such as those recognized by the Webby Awards every year. You can also visit *leanbranding.com* for inspiring cases.

Where Should We Post?

Everywhere is definitely a lousy (and wasteful!) answer for this question. *Everywhere your target audience is currently spending their time* is a better answer. Why on earth would we want to waste time, money, and effort

starting conversations in rooms where no one will ever buy from us? You don't sell porn in church. Louis Vuitton does not open stores in slums. Don't set up a social media profile where no one's listening.

Simple, strategic, lean. Look for social networks where the personas we created in [Chapter 3](#) are likely to hang out. Agencies, the press, and social networking companies themselves are constantly releasing demographic profiles of the audience in different platforms.

A 2014 survey by the Pew Research Center shows that young adults are more likely than others to use major social media.^[42] At the same time, other groups are interested in different sites and services. Look at these results and see which platforms make sense for the customer that you are trying to speak to.^[43]

Social networking site	% of online adults who use it	Gender most likely to use it	Age group most likely to use it	Education level most likely to use it
Facebook	71%	Women	18–29	Some college
LinkedIn	22%	Men	30–64	College or more
Pinterest	21%	Women	18–49	College or more
Twitter	18%	No significant difference between genders	18–29	No significant difference between education levels
Instagram	17%	Women	18–29	Some college

How Should We Post?

Publishing in several social networks every day might seem like an overwhelming task. Luckily, there are many social media management tools that are here to make our lives easier. Simply put, they are tools that we use to manage our brand's presence across several social media channels. These social media management tools give us a broad picture of what is happening in different networks, allow us to publish in several of them at a time, and offer many other advantages, such as:

Scheduling

Submit posts in advance and decide when your audience sees them. Hootsuite, one of the tools you will learn about shortly, offers a useful feature called “Autoscheduler” that decides when the time is optimal and publishes then.

Shortened URLs

Long links can be a nightmare with Twitter’s limited character count. Social media management tools shorten your URLs to give you more space for what is really important: your message. They also allow the app to “follow” your message wherever it goes and track clicks. You will learn more about what these click stats mean in **Part III**. Alternatively, you can purchase a branded link-shortening service that generates what we know as *vanity URLs*. This tactic is being used by brands like USA Today (*usat.ly/<xxxxx>*) and Mashable (*on.mash.to/<xxxxx>*).

Multiple profiles

Although some types of content are more suitable for specific platforms (i.e., some images in Pinterest and Instagram, others for Facebook, and links in Twitter and LinkedIn), sometimes you may want to broadcast a single message across platforms. Think about opening five or six tabs and having to publish independently the same amount of times. A more time-efficient move is to use a social media management tool that pushes content to several platforms simultaneously. That’s right: one-click multiplatform publishing.

Analytics and reporting

Once your posts are out in the (Internet) world, you need to know how many people are clicking through and reading them. **Part III** will expand on this idea so that you can tell which brand messages are resonating well and adjust accordingly. Feeling curious? Check out **Chapter 8**.

Teamwork

Some of these tools offer teams the possibility of splitting the work. Several users can schedule and publish content, and everyone can see who has created what. I can't emphasize how important this feature has been for my teams in the past. You can even create a workflow where someone creates draft posts and someone else proofreads or edits before they are published. It just works.

Keyword research

Remember what I said about using hashtags for secondary research in [Chapter 3](#)? (If not, go back: it's in the "Branding on Steroids" sidebar called "Social Media Research.") Some of these tools enable a hashtag search that you can add to your dashboard, and there it is: live keyword research 24/7! Take a peek to find new ideas for content to publish, stay on top of what competitors are doing, and figure out what customers think of your brand.

At this point, we've already figured out why, what, and where we should post. We also know that there are some tools to help us deal with the *how*, and we've reviewed some of the best features they offer. Here is a list of some of these tools:

- Hootsuite, www.hootsuite.com^[44]
- Buffer, www.bufferapp.com
- Sprout Social, www.sproutsocial.com

When Should We Post?

We've already established that each social network attracts a particular audience, so it should come as no surprise that optimal timing is different for each one. Many studies have determined the best times to post for each platform, taking into account the amount of clicks and eyeballs that we attract on any given day or time.

Bit.ly released data about the best times to post on each social network for maximum exposure:^[45]

Twitter

- Best time to get clicks: 1 p.m. through 3 p.m., Monday through Thursday.
- Time with the highest traffic: 9 a.m. through 3 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Facebook

- Best time to get clicks: 1 p.m. through 4 p.m. everyday. Peak time: Wednesdays at 3 p.m.
- Time with the highest traffic: midweek, 1 p.m. through 3 p.m.

Needless to say, these time periods are not set in stone, and your particular audience or niche may deviate from the general trend. Watch for which times work best for *your* audience. The tools we discussed in the previous section all provide reliable autoscheduling features that should help you post at optimal times.

Landing Pages

A landing page is exactly what the term implies: a site where your prospective buyers first “land” to know about your brand. As you know by now, first impressions are crucial and can be heavily influenced with visually powerful cues. Let’s find out what some of those cues are for landing pages:

Headline

Use an appealing yet informative phrase that makes visitors want to know more about what you can offer. A key word here is *tempting*. Remember the brand promise we created in **Chapter 3**? Its time has come.

Copy

Focus on three or four main features that differentiate your product and

explain them in terms of benefits for the customer. Bullets do a great job at capturing distracted minds (aren't they all, nowadays?).

Imagery and/or video

Show what your product looks like using static mockups or a short video. Neither of these should slow down the site's loading time. For landing pages, the ability to load quickly is extremely important.

Call to action

What is it that you want visitors to do? Buy your app directly? Subscribe to your email updates? Create an account on your site? Whatever it is, make it clear and easy to execute. Avoid having many calls to action that compete against each other and confuse your users to the point of *inaction*. More isn't necessarily better in this area.

Reviews and validation

This goes back to "show, don't tell." It's one thing to see how obsessed you are about your own brand (*that's a shocker!*) and an entirely different one to see someone else who is. Have you collected any customer testimonies, media praise or awards? *Show what others think.*

Tips

Show, don't tell

Images go a long way, especially when they include people and contexts related to your product. Back in [Chapter 4](#) we discussed the importance of imagery to convey brand value.

Focus on benefits, not features

It's great that your product offers over 100 features that competitors can't—but that's just not the reason someone will buy from you or at least stay a few more seconds on your landing page. What is your unique value

proposition? How are you making life easier for someone? Brands, as you'll remember from [Chapter 1](#), must be a bridge between who we are (active self) and who we aspire to be (possible selves).

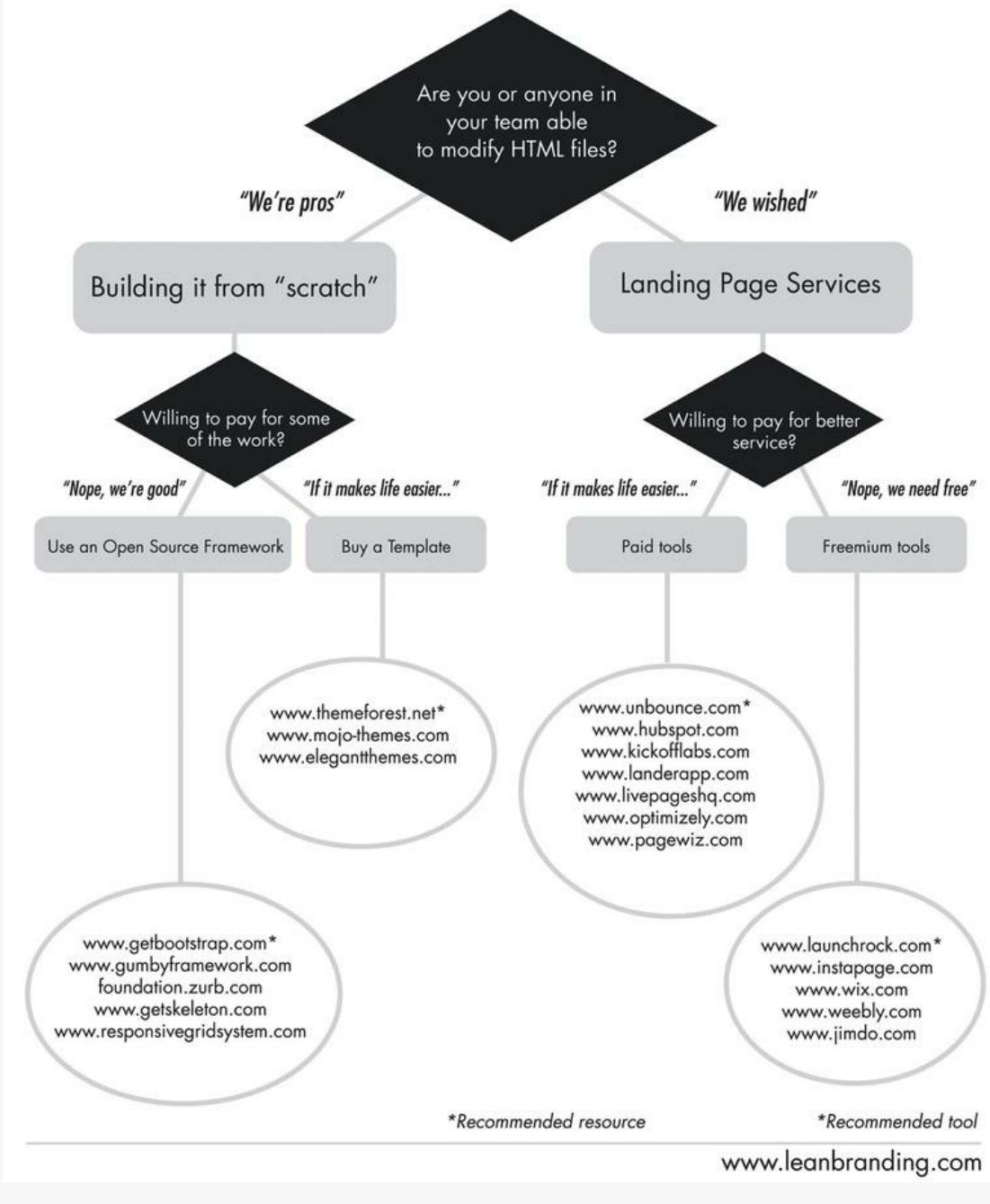
This is not your home page

There's a reason why this ingredient is called a "landing page" and not merely a website. A landing page's main goal is to convert: to lead someone down a desired action path. You can have a single website and multiple landing pages leading to different aspects of your value offer. Think about it this way: *if your full website is the entrée, landing pages are appetizers.* They should show enough to make you hungry, grab a bite, and possibly visit your full site if the flavor was good enough.

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: LANDING PAGE TOOLS

Whether or not you know your way around HTML, there are landing page tools for everyone. Check out these resources to speed up your landing page creation process.

CREATING YOUR LANDING PAGE



Search Engine Optimization

Too much has been said about search engine optimization (SEO). It's one of

those buzzwords that everyone defines differently and is annoyingly opinionated about. Here's what it comes down to: SEO is just about making your content clever enough so that search engines can find and reference your brand properly.

Do this with me: type your full name in your favorite search engine. What comes up? Do your social media profiles come up first, second, third? If you have a personal website, can the average Joe who's searching for you find it? *Do you even exist?*

It is safe to say that your "online existence" depends on whether you can be found. With brands, it is even more important to exist and rank appropriately. Prospective buyers should be able to find you not only by searching for your name, but also by searching for their needs (which is how they usually search anyway). We call these words related to needs, wants, competitors, and features *keywords*.

It's straightforward: *key*-words: words that are related to your offering and that may actually lead people into buying from you. There are several simple ways to find, monitor, and use these words to your advantage.

To find out which keywords to use, check out the following resources:

- Google Adwords Keyword Planner,
<https://adwords.google.com/o/KeywordTool>
- Keyword Discovery, www.keyworddiscovery.com
- Wordtracker, freekeywords.wordtracker.com
- Ubersuggest, www.ubersuggest.org
- Spyfu, www.spyfu.com. This one is great to see what keywords your competitors are currently using. It will give you an idea of words that might work for you, too, but by no means should these be identical.
- Bing Tool, www.bing.com/toolbox/keywords

To learn what's new with your keywords over time and find content for

social media, use:

Hashtag search

Every social media management tool we've covered in this book has a feature where you can type in your keywords and the app generates a live feed. Revisit the section **Social Media Marketing** earlier in this chapter to see some of the options that are available.

Google Alerts

You basically tell Google that you are interested in following a few words (*key-words*) and its search engine will “monitor the Web for interesting new content.” Visit www.google.com/alerts and fill out the short form; you will receive periodic emails when new content comes up.

Feedly Tracking Tools

If you use Feedly as your newsreader, there is a nice feature called Tracking Tools where you let it know a few topics that interest you and it will create a feed based on that.

Topsy

This is an absolutely essential tool to figure out who the influencers are in your category. Just go to www.topsy.com and type in relevant keywords to obtain a detailed analysis of the most important tweets, links, photos, videos, and influencers related to your topic of interest—within a specific time range.

In-app search tools

Twitter, for instance, offers an Advanced Search tool where you can look for users and individual tweets about any given topic. With Open Graph, Facebook has also opened the door for powerful search. Just use the search bar at the top of the screen and you will be able to find people, apps, pages, events, and much more by typing in names and simple phrases to connect them. LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Instagram offer similar,

yet simpler, search capabilities.

To improve your search engine ranking based on those keywords:

- Refer to your key terms as much as you can, and make sure that you are following basic HTML SEO practices like including these terms (keywords) in your metadescriptions and headings. A *metadescription* is one of the many *metatags* that you can insert in your website's code. Don't let the jargon intimidate you: "metatags" is just another way of saying "pieces of information that are invisible to visitors and visible to search engines" or "search engine language." However, let me warn you, search engines are increasingly looking beyond this "underground" setup in favor of a more natural (i.e., organic) use of your keywords.
- Here's a place where you want to constantly refer back to your search keywords: the body of your content. You don't want to spam people with these words; try to insert them naturally, as part of the content flow.

Other ways to improve how you are ranked:

Link to other sites and get other sites to link to yours.

When other sites link to yours, it's called a *backlink*—and search engines will think you are more trustworthy if many others recommend you. Sounds logical, right?

Submit your site to directories.

Some sites collect URLs and organize them in categories. If you've been paying attention, you already know that these are valuable backlinks that can push you up in search results.

Claim site ownership.

Search engines like Google and Bing provide a dashboard to stay on top of how their bots "read" your site. When you sign up for each of their Webmaster Tools, you will be asked to verify ownership of each of your sites. In doing so, you become the search engine's official contact in case

something goes wrong. Webmaster Tools provide you with detailed reports about your site's visibility as well as crawl errors.

Submit your sitemap to search engines.

Similarly, search engines constantly “inspect” websites to detect your site’s structure, determine which sections to index, and determine whether new content has been created. Please make all of our lives easier and give search engines the information they need to do their jobs. Submitting a sitemap allows you to reveal your site’s inner organization, and this structure comes in handy when users are trying to find solutions to their problems in search engines. Both Google and Bing provide Webmaster Tools dashboards that allow you to upload these sitemaps.

Create great content that generates quality traffic.

Coming up next, the **Content Marketing: Blogging** section will give you ideas on how to do this.

Create profiles in social networks.

Go back to the section **Social Media Marketing** for ideas on how to do this. Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter shares add to your site’s credibility, and search engines pick up on this.

Content Marketing: Blogging

Blogging can be a great anchor to create interest around your brand story. Prospective buyers, current customers, press members, and investors will find your voice and new (constantly updated) reasons to trust you and your product.

Others are drawn to your brand because of who’s behind it, not in spite of it.

A well-kept blog adds even more value to prospective buyers and current customers, beyond what your product offers. Some great topics to address in your brand blog include:

- Tutorials
- Case studies
- Lists or roundups of valuable resources and tools
- Videos
- Reviews and testimonials
- Guest posts
- Research (infographics, white papers, case studies)
- Contests, discounts, and giveaways
- Inspirational quotes
- Striking images
- Answers to common questions
- Interviews
- Slideshows from presentations you've delivered

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: BLOG BOOSTERS

Sometimes we overlook seemingly insignificant blog features that can actually boost our conversion rate:

- **Create a downloadable piece that your customers crave.** And ask for their email or a tweet in exchange! Select a piece of content that your customers would be willing to act for. This does not necessarily mean paying, at least not in the traditional sense of the word. Customers can also “pay” by tweeting, inviting others, submitting their own emails, sharing via Facebook, and many other actions that increase your reach.

Tools that help you do this: *InboundNow.com*, *PayWithATweet.com*, *Cloudflood.com*, *SocialPay.me*.

- **Make everything easy to share!** Use social bars or buttons to make it easy for customers to

share your content with their peers. Every social network out there has some sort of “share button” that you can add to your website’s code easily.

Tools that help you do this: social bars like Addthis and Sharethis combine several social network buttons in a single widget that you can embed easily.

- **Have contests.** Engage with your customers by offering a token in exchange for some desired action. Ask them to participate in a contest via social media where you offer a product (ideally the one you are selling, or some item related to it) in exchange for a valuable action. At this point you’re probably thinking: what is this “valuable action”? Answer: whatever your conversion goal is at the moment: have someone like or follow your page or profile, collect more signups, or gather answers for a given survey, for example. There are third-party apps that can make launching contests much easier; try some of the following.

Tools that help you do this:

- Woobox (www.woobox.com)
- EasyPromos (www.easypromosapp.com)
- Shortstack (www.shortstack.com)
- Pagemodo (www.pagemodo.com)
- SocialTools (www.socialtools.me)
- Rafflecopter (www.rafflecopter.com)
- Contest Domination (www.contestdomination.com)

- **Give out an exclusive discount.** Prepare a discount for your best customers that is both economically feasible and has some sort of engagement hook. In other words: how do you expect them to act when they receive this discount? Make it clear that this opportunity is exclusive and invite them to take advantage. This idea also works for sampling: when you want to break the barrier with a new customer and have her try your product. Why this works: feeling special, unique, and valued is a powerful human decision driver. By sending an “exclusive” discount, you are communicating a signal of appreciation and potentially triggering reciprocity: many customers will now want to give back.

Tools that help you do this:

- Daily Deals sites that appeal to your demographic such as:
 - Digital goods: AppSumo, MightyDeals
 - Other goods: Groupon, LivingSocial
- Your website’s shopping cart should have a “Coupon” or “Discount” feature. Use it.
- Similarly, if you operate in a marketplace, most of them offer discount features. Even the iTunes store, a mobile app marketplace, offers developers a limited number of promo codes that they can send over to exclusive users (reviewers, bloggers, the press, etc.). Try UseTokens.com for iOS.

OTHERS ARE DRAWN
to your brand because of
*who's behind it,
not in spite of it.*



Paid Advertising

Not all growth is organic. You shouldn't expect social media profiles, a video, a landing page, or pretty much anything else to be seen by anyone unless you make sure of it. When executed well, paid advertising can increase the reach of your brand message and bring quality leads (i.e., potential buyers) to places where you can *actually* make the sell. For online ads, these landing pages are the magic places where you achieve conversion. Further along in this chapter, there is an entire section where you will learn how to optimize them.

Online advertising has made it easier to see how much we are spending for every customer that clicks through, sees our ad, or follows us in social media, among many other goals.

When it comes to paying for advertising your brand, you will want to consider three smart places for ads:

- Sites that publish content that your customers actually read
- Search results that your customers are likely to be looking for
- Social networks where your customers usually hang out

Bottom line: only pay for spaces where your customers can see you. Everything else is off-target—wasting time, money, and effort.

Display Ads

Let's consider the first smart place for ads: sites publishing content that your customers actually read.

Although you could buy ad space from (several) individual vendors, it is often easier and most efficient to rely on aggregators like Google AdWords to distribute ads for you. What Google AdWords does is place your ad within any of its thousands of partner sites and charge you based on the amount of clicks, impressions, or conversions it generates.

NOTE

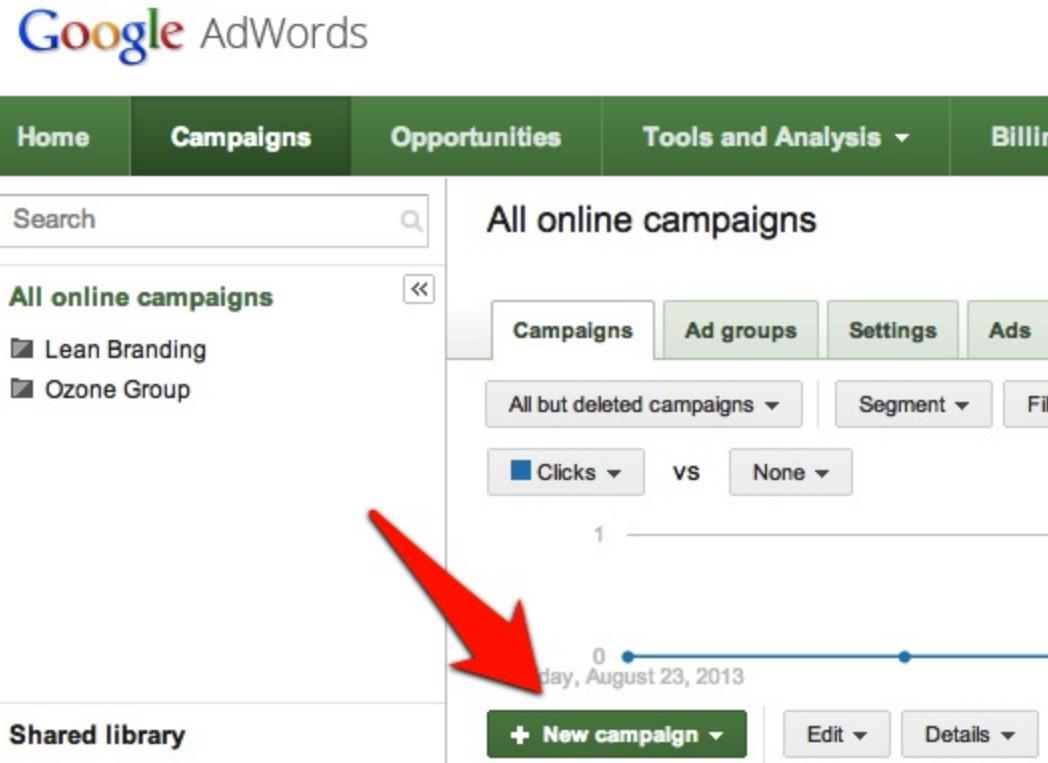
There are many other advertising platforms for different search engines and countries, but I will be referring to Google because it is the most widely used.

Google will automatically (out of the box) use something called *contextual targeting*—all that means is you get matched up with a site that makes sense for the keywords in yours. All you have to do is tell Google that you want to show up on its Display Networks for the magic to happen.

Here's the step by step:

1. Visit *adwords.google.com* and open an account.

2. Select Create New Campaign.



3. Select Display Networks Only.

4. In the General Box, name your campaign.

5. In “Desktops and laptops, mobile devices, and tablets,” tell Google if you want this ad to appear only for specific devices.

6. In Locations and Languages, select a location to include or exclude. Select your audience's language.
7. In Bidding and Budget, Google allows you to pay for every impression, click, conversion, or a (more advanced) combination of them. Set a budget per day.
8. In Ad Extensions, add your location and/or a phone number to become even more reachable. If you add your phone number, users will be able to call you straight from the ad.
9. Here's the interesting part: targeting. We want to narrow down our audience as much as possible to avoid wasting money on people who won't buy from us. Remember the bottom line: *pay for spaces where your customers can see you*. If necessary, go back to the Customer Personas we created in [Chapter 3](#) to get an idea of the demographics you should be targeting. Google offers various ways in which you can narrow it down:
 - Based on your site's keywords
 - Based on people's interests
 - Based on the display site's topics
 - Based on placement: you select specific websites where you'd like to appear
 - Based on your audience's age
 - Based on your audience's gender

Type: Display Network only - All features

An ad group contains one or more ads and targeting methods. For best results, try to focus all the ads and targeting in this ad group on one product or service. Learn how to structure your account.

Ad Group name

Default bid

Choose how to target your ads

Display keywords – show ads on sites related to your keywords.
 Interests & remarketing – show ads to people based on their interests.
 Use a different targeting method

Potential reach per week on the Display Network
10B+ Impressions
Your potential reach may be lower than shown because certain information, like keywords or ad formats, isn't included in these estimates. [Learn more](#)

Display keywords

Enter keywords one per line	Selected keywords: 0
<input type="text"/>	

Narrow your targeting further (optional)

10. Now you will be able to create the actual ad. It can be an image, text, or display ad. Traditional image ad sizes are as follows.

Ad dimensions	Ad types
320 × 50	Mobile banner
468 × 60	Banner
728 × 90	Leaderboard
250 × 250	Square
200 × 200	Small square
336 × 280	Large rectangle
300 × 250	Inline rectangle
120 × 600	Skyscraper
160 × 600	Wide skyscraper
300 × 600	Half-page ad
970 × 90	Large leaderboard
240 × 400	Vertical rectangle

980 × 120	Panorama
930 × 180	Top banner
250 × 360	Triple widescreen
580 × 400	Netboard

For display ads, Google shows you templates that will usually require product pictures, a headline, one or several descriptive phrases, as well as links where you want customers to go after they click on the ad. *Landing pages*, remember?

Search Ads

You could also decide that you just want your brand to appear in search results. That is our second smart place to insert ads.

To create a campaign where your ad appears next to search results, repeat the process just described, but select Search Network Only instead of Display Networks Only. You can also advertise both in search results and partner websites by selecting Search *and* Display Networks.

In step 8, Ad Extensions, you will see a couple more options. You can add links within your site and/or associate them with your Google+ page. Next, Google will ask you for a headline, two descriptive lines, a display URL (the link users actually *see* on the ad), and a destination URL (the link they *visit* when they click on the ad). As always, Google will show you a handy preview.

Create an ad

To get started, write your first ad below. Remember, you can always create more ads later. [Learn how to write a great text ad](#)

Headline

Description line 1

Description line 2

Display URL [?](#) http://

Destination URL [?](#)

Ad preview: The following ad previews may be formatted slightly differently from what is shown to users. [Learn more](#)

Side ad

New York Budget Hotel
www.example.com
Clean and close to subway.
Students save 20%!

Top ad

New York Budget Hotel - Clean and close to subway.
www.example.com
Students save 20%!

Ad extensions expand your ad with additional information like a business address or product images.
[Take a tour](#)

In step 9, you will notice that your targeting (i.e., narrowing down audience) options are reduced to only keywords. Think about it: this time around,

customers will find your brand when they are *searching* on Google, so it makes sense that the criteria to filter them out are precisely the *words* they are searching for (keywords). Here's what it looks like.

The screenshot shows the 'Keywords' tab of the Google Keyword Planner. At the top, there is a section titled 'Select keywords' with a note: 'Your ad can show on Google when people search for things related to your keywords.' Below this is a 'Tips' section with the following bullet points:

- Start with 10-20 keywords.
- Be specific: avoid one-word keywords. Choose phrases that customers would use to search for your products and services.
- By default, keywords are broad matched to searches to help you capture a wider range of relevant traffic. Use match types to control this.
- Learn more about choosing effective keywords.

Below the tips is a text input field labeled 'Add your keywords here'. At the bottom right of the input field is a small icon of a document with a pencil. At the very bottom left is a button labeled 'Estimate search traffic'.

If at any point in time you want to control which keywords Google thinks are relevant for your brand, go to the Keywords tab and modify them, add new ones, or delete existing ones.

Social Network Ads

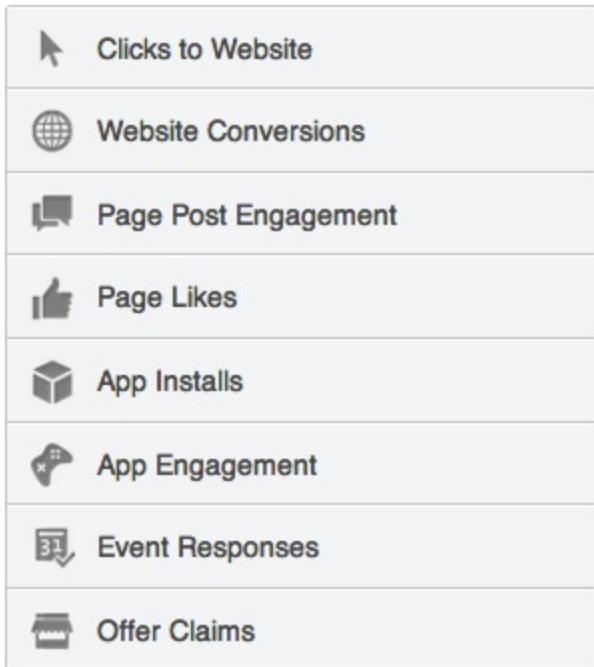
Finally, consumers spend a conveniently impressive amount of time in social networks. These are our third smart space to place ads.

Paying for space in platforms where your customers socialize is smart, and we will look at Facebook Ads because it happens to be the network with the highest amount of users. Both Twitter and LinkedIn have launched attractive advertising programs worth taking a look at as well.

Let's go over how a Facebook ad is created:

1. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/ads/create/>.
2. Specify which kind of result you are expecting from this ad campaign.

What kind of results do you want for your ads?



3. No matter what your goal is for this particular campaign, Facebook will ask you for four key components: a destination URL (where is the user supposed to go when he clicks?), a headline, a short amount of text (copy), and an image to illustrate your message.
4. Facebook shows you how the real ads will look on the News Feed and in the Right Column Format. You can remove either of these formats by clicking on the Remove link on the top-right corner of each box.
5. Let Facebook know who should see your ad by filling out the Create Your Audience box. You can select specific cities, an age group or gender, interests, and whether the person or the person's friends are already connected to some Facebook page, app, or event. Click on advanced targeting options to target a specific language or relationships status, among other traits.
6. This is your chance to decide how much you are spending on this campaign. Name your campaign, let Facebook know how much you are

willing to spend per day (maximum) or in total, how much time it should last, and whether you want Facebook to decide how much you pay per click or impression, or if you'll tell it yourself. When you pay per impression (CPM), you are basically paying for eyeballs, and when you pay per click (CPC) you pay only if the user clicks through and visits the URL specified in step 3.

The screenshot shows the 'Campaign and Budget' section of the Facebook Ads setup. It includes fields for 'New Campaign Name' (Lean Branding Fall), 'Campaign Budget' (\$10.00 per day), and a note about spending \$320.00 maximum over 32 days. The 'Campaign Schedule' section allows setting a start date (8/30/2013, 2:16 PM) and end date (9/30/2013, 2:16 PM). The 'Conversion Tracking' section offers tracking on the website. Under 'Optimization', the option 'Optimize for clicks' is selected. The 'Pricing' section indicates a CPC bid of \$0.55, with a suggested bid range of \$0.36-\$0.70 USD.

A word on mobile advertising

Both of the advertising platforms that we've discussed allow you to advertise in mobile devices. By default, every new Google AdWords campaign targets all types of devices, which include desktops, tablets, and mobile phones. You can change this in each campaign's Settings tab, under Devices, and decide if you want to bid higher or lower or remove certain devices.

Similarly, Facebook Ads allow you to specifically target mobile device users. If you've built a mobile app that is on the Google Play or the iTunes App Store, you can select App Installs or App Engagement back in step 2. These ads take mobile users directly to the store for purchase and have been used successfully by thousands of developers around the world.

You will learn how to measure these campaigns' results in [Chapter 8](#).

Email List

Once you capture someone's attention, you'll definitely want him/her to stick around. Often, simple attention via online content won't get you the sale because potential buyers haven't had enough time to understand how you'll take them from point A to point B (remember, *fulfill their aspirations*). This is where an email list comes in and saves the day. It helps you *extend* your brand experience and establish a mid- or long-term relationship with your potential buyers and current customers.

As you prepare to create and grow your email list, this maxim will keep you sane:

Assume everyone is ultrabusy, on a deadline, and/or couldn't care less.

When building an email marketing strategy, you will constantly find yourself walking a fine line between timeliness and saturation. Overexposing subscribers to content that does not resonate well or feel particularly relevant to them can generate dropouts and negative perceptions of your brand.

The best advice to avoid losing your subscribers' interest is to figure out which frequency, topics, and schedules work best for your list. This information is obtained through continuous measurement. Remember: what works for one list may not work for the next.

There are, however, some general pointers that can contribute to your success in building an email marketing strategy:

- *Segment* your list according to specific consumer traits: this will help ensure that the content they receive is even *more* relevant to their needs. You could break down your subscriber list by gender, location, age, or industry. Alternatively, you can explore segmenting this list based on past behaviors related to purchasing, interaction with your site, engagement, and whether or not they have reviewed you, among others.
- *Personalize* different components of your email campaigns: have you ever

received an email from a brand where they have addressed you by your name? Using variables, it is possible to embed someone's name in a subject line, headline, and in other areas of the email's body.

- *Design responsively* by making sure that your email templates are mobile-friendly, since users may check their email using smartphones, tablets, and other devices with small screens.
- *Integrate* email with other communication channels like social media and landing pages. Do you let social media followers know that they can subscribe to your emails, and email subscribers know that they can follow you in social networking sites?
- *Add unique value* to your email subscribers by providing something exclusive that only *they* can access. Consider offering special discounts, trials, and giveaways.
- *Measure* a set of actionable performance metrics. **Chapter 6** presents a series of strategies to measure the impact of different components of your brand strategy on conversion. Email is one such component. By continuously testing the effectiveness of different elements (e.g., headline, subject line, time, date) you will optimize the performance of your email campaigns.
- *Speak to a buyer persona*, not to a robot. When communicating, keep in mind that there is a *very real* human being behind the screen! Remembering the buyer personas we created back in **Chapter 3** and imagining that you are specifically addressing them will help you figure out the language.
- *Speak like a person*, not a robot. Along the same lines as the previous point, *you* are also a real human being. Read your copy out loud. Does it sound like a tool? If so, it is probably not human enough. Remember and impersonate the brand personality that we created back in **Chapter 3**. People relate to people, so get on it.

- *Dummy-proof your call to action* by making it obvious what the email recipient is supposed to do next. Is your call to action clear and evident, or did you hide it in some obscure 5pt font at the bottom of the email? Are you using intimidating vocabulary? This is *not* the place to flaunt your literature skills, *except* for this one: actions are verbs. You want action? You use crisp verbs. Words like:

- *leave/provide your*
- *share it*
- *help us*
- *check out this/these*
- *order/get/purchase your*
- *sign up/subscribe/join/register*
- *fill out/answer this/these*
- *take a look/watch/view*
- *click/follow this link*
- *read*
- *send*
- *start/get started*
- *connect/contact*
- *try*
- *create*
- *learn more*

— download/grab

- *Use logical subject lines*—though there is no single, surefire recipe for successful email subject lines, Mailchimp studied 40 million emails to give us a few insights as to what worked and what didn’t. Here’s what it came up with:

So what’s our advice when it comes to email subject lines? This might sound dead-simple, but here you have it: Your subject line should (drum roll please) describe the subject of your email. Yep, that’s it.

Always set your subscribers’ expectations during the opt-in process about what kinds of emails they’re going to receive. Don’t confuse newsletters with promotions. If your email is a newsletter, put the name and issue of the newsletter in your subject line. Because that’s what’s inside. If your email is a special promotion, say so in the subject line. Either way, just don’t write your subject lines like advertisements.

When it comes to email marketing, the best subject lines tell what’s inside, and the worst subject lines sell what’s inside. [46]

- **Leverage other tools.** Are you communicating with email subscribers on different time zones? Some email platforms now allow you to send out email based on each recipient’s time zone (and not yours).

Video

For the sake of surviving in our chaotic marketplace, here’s an assumption you’ll always want to make:

There are three types of potential buyers: busy, busier, and busiest.

AKA Break through or die.

This is your chance to create a shorter version of your brand story that appeals to potential buyers in a visually powerful way. Some of the goals that you can achieve with a great (and concise) marketing video are:

- Show how your brand will take the buyer from A to B, where B is whom they aspire to be.
- Show why your brand surpasses its competitors—by far.

- Show how the consumer can purchase your brand *now*, easily and with no regrets.

Notice my excessive use of the word *show*. It is no coincidence. In my experience, *showing* is what opens wallets. I can't understand why some brands still want to make the sale using something other than rock-solid evidence. Potential buyers sniff bland evidence and walk past it.

But just where do you get rock-solid evidence from? Review systems are up next.

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: PRODUCING YOUR FIRST VIDEO

Unless you have a video guru on board, this is something you don't want your team to tackle. You'll be better off outsourcing video production. *That being said*, there are a couple of tools worth looking at if cash is a major issue at the moment. Take a look at the following marketplaces and agencies that can make it happen.

Marketplaces where you can find video producers:

- Video Brewery (www.videobrewery.com)
- VeedMe (www.veed.me)
- Userfarm (www.userfarm.com)
- Wooshii (www.wooshii.com)
- SmartShoot (www.smartshoot.com)

Agencies that offer moderate pricing for startups:

- Epipheo (www.epipheo.com)
- Thinkmojo (www.thinkmojo.net)
- Grumo Media (www.grumomedia.com)
- Demo Duck (www.demoduck.com)
- SimplyVideo (www.simplyvideo.com)
- Viedit (www.viedit.com)
- Picturelab (www.picturelab.tv)
- LooseKeys (www.loosekeys.tv)

- Explania (www.explania.com)

DIY Tools (Handle with care!)

- GoAnimate (www.goanimate.com/videomaker)
- PowToon (www.powtoon.com)
- Animoto (www.animoto.com)
- Sparkol (www.sparkol.com)
- Moovly (www.moovly.com)

Review Systems

Is someone already using your product? It doesn't matter if we are talking about one or one hundred users: they are extremely important within your brand communications strategy. To begin with, they are the first voice (outside of your own) that you can use to validate your brand promise. Back in **Chapter 3** we designed a brand promise and brand positioning that showed how you were going to take the customer from A to B (create value for him/her). Well, guess what? Your first users are somewhere between A and B—hopefully closer to B—and are ready to let others know you are for real.

The point of review systems is to make it easier for your existing customers to deliver feedback that can help convert new customers. You basically implement a tool that customers can use to let you know whether your brand has delivered its promise and if there is room for improvement. In **Part III** we will be using these reviews to decide which strategic changes make sense, and in **Part IV** we will learn how to apply these changes.

For now, you can use any of these tools to collect feedback from your first users:

- Give out early trials to influencers and ask them to review your product in exchange.
- Offer comment cards at point of purchase or reviews in app stores,

depending on whether it is a physical or digital product.

- Use specialized community feedback sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp.
- Use live feedback and support tabs like Uservoice, Zendesk, and Olark.
- Post on your Facebook wall, Twitter feed, and other social media-based spaces.

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: REVIEW TOOLS

There are many tools available to help you collect feedback and reviews from your first customers. Some of the most popular involve a “live chat” feature or a support form found in a small tab for your website. Take a look at the following sites to determine which one works best for your needs and budget:

- Olark (www.olark.com)
- SnapEngage (www.snapengage.com)
- Zopim (www.zopim.com)
- Uservoice (www.uservoice.com)
- GetSatisfaction (www.getsatisfaction.com)
- Qualaroo (www.qualaroo.com)

Media Relations

Consider the life of a reporter for a second. Tips, emails, typing, calling, traveling, deadlines. Why should this very busy individual stop what she is doing to listen to you (or read your story), spend time writing about it, and eventually feature it? The same idea about customers applies here:

There are three types of press reporters: busy, busier, and busiest.

AKA Break through or die.

Our goal, then, should be to create a press release that truly breaks through the clutter and gets us the attention our brand needs. A press release is simply

a document where you communicate some news about your brand in such a way that reporters can get the information they need in order to publish it.

At this point you're probably wondering what about your brand could make a great headline. Get picked up by a blog, newspaper, or magazine with any (or all!) of the following excuses:

- You are launching a closed/open beta or your actual public debut.
- You've reached a milestone regarding users, followers, traffic, or subscribers.
- Your app is going places! You've reached a new country or city.
- You've translated your UI in a new language.
- Investors trust your app: you've received financing.
- People who know trust your app: you've won an award.
- You are adding features or pivoting in a new direction.
- Your product just became available in a new platform or store.
- You just hired some great talent worth introducing.

Next you will find a template for creating a clutter-free press release.

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Brand name and logo

Date

Release Date (Usually: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

Title of the press release

Location (Where is this coming from?)

Paragraph 1 Who, what, where, when and why

Paragraphs 2-5 Use quotes to validate your claims and add credibility. Communicate a clear call to action: what are readers supposed to do now? Do you offer any advantages to those answering your call? Use keywords to optimize the way this release is found online.

About/Bio Short summary of your brand story. Mention key characters and any accomplishments. Include your URL.

Contact In case this reporter needed/wanted more information, who should he/she contact and how?

###

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Tips

- Let press members know you know exactly who they are—or at least their names.
- Keep it short and sweet. If you only had a tweet’s length to describe what is so amazing, unique, and shareable about the news that you are trying to push, what would you say?
- Include a call to action. Invite the reporter to call you with suggestions and let her know you are open to her input.
- Use your assets. Visual power, remember? Attach the imagery we created back in [Chapter 4](#) to engage recipients beyond text. These images also make great material for a published article about your product.

Want to step it up a notch? Complement your landing page with a special section for press members and the general public. These sections are often called *pressrooms*, and they include statistics, news, testimonials, partnerships, and evidence of traction that impress your audience. Check out the following “Inspiration Hack” sidebar to find some tips regarding this new section.

Pressrooms are not just for the big guns. Building a strong online press section can help reporters get the assets that they need to write a great article about you. Jason Baptiste, who cofounded OnSwipe, gives us great insider tips to get press for your brand when you’re just getting started. Take a look at his “Ways to Get Press When You Launch Your Startup” in the upcoming “Get on It” sidebar.

INSPIRATION HACK: PRESSROOMS AND MEDIA KITS

Your new pressroom should include the following information:

Traction

Who is buying your brand? Quantify and qualify your audience.

Credibility

Who has partnered with you to share your brand story? Media outlets, other companies, and

affiliates validate the hard work you've been putting into brand development.

Brand story

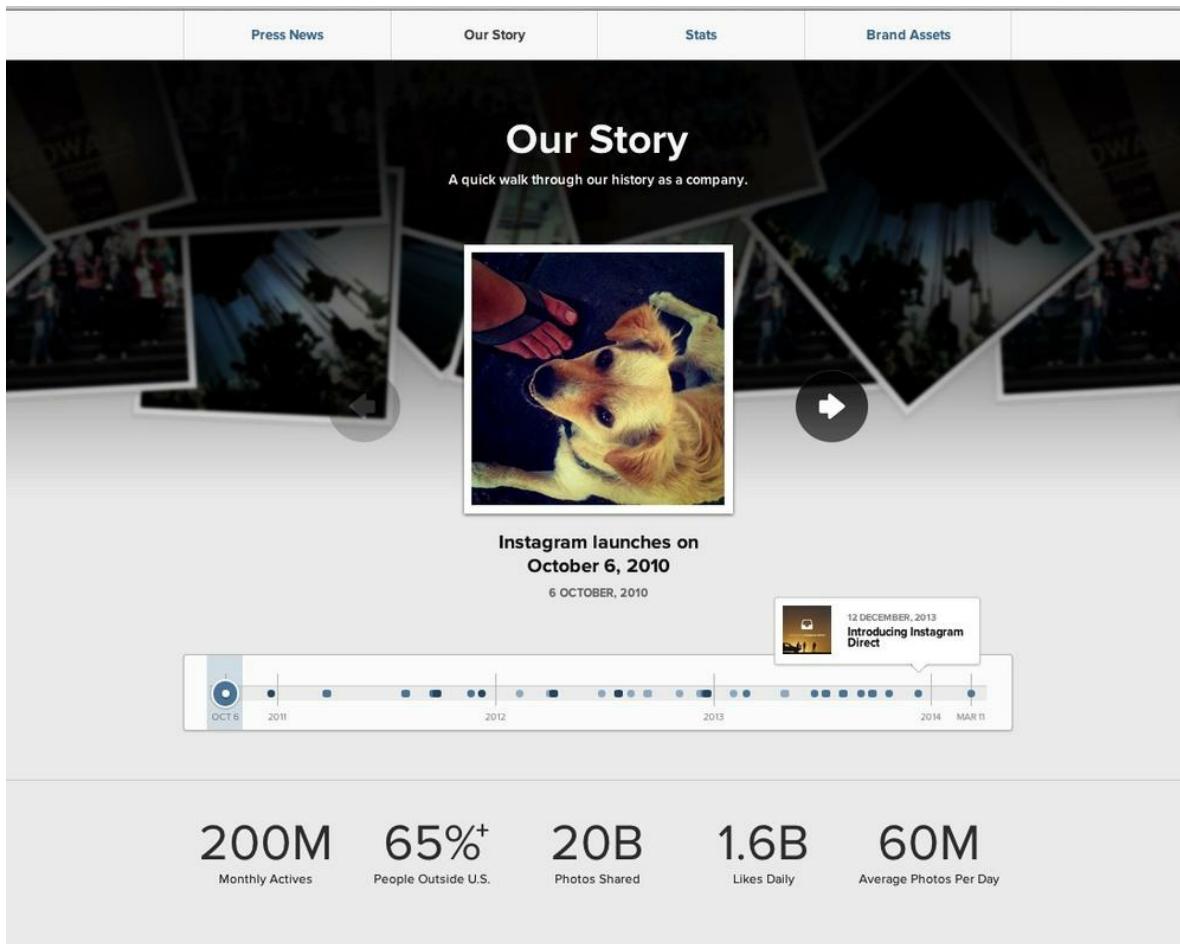
Share your brand promise, positioning, and personality (developed in [Chapter 3](#)). Show your pricing scheme and the benefits associated with each level.

Brand symbols

Some companies will also share visual assets with the press to ensure that the symbols they've created (like logos, color palettes, typography, and imagery) are used correctly.

These brands offer great examples of how to get your message across with media kits and pressrooms:

- Instagram: <http://instagram.com/press/>
- Balsamiq: <http://www.balsamiq.com/company/press>
- Crowdbooster: <http://crowdbooster.com/press/#presskit>
- Angry Birds: <http://www.rovio.com/en/news/press-kits>



Instagram uses its press site to communicate important brand milestones

GET ON IT: WAYS TO GET PRESS WHEN YOU LAUNCH YOUR STARTUP

1. **Tell a story.** Tell a story that will transfer from (a) your mouth to (b) the journalist's keyboard to (c) the reader's eyes.
2. **Be prepared technically.** Articles can't be rewritten and you only have one shot at first, so make sure your app can leave a good impression.
3. **Segment your list.** You need to segment your press list depending upon the exact angle and topic of the publication.
4. **Give a taste of the future.** Don't talk too much about the future, since you're not there yet, but give a glimpse into it. This also makes setting up future stories a whole lot easier.
5. **Be brief.** Keep your pitches short and make sure the basic gist fits into the first glance of a Gmail subject line.

6. **Give all links to detailed resources.** Keep the actual pitch email very short and to the point with a call to action. For more detailed information, link to it inside the email and make it apparent.
 7. **Founders > PR firm.** It's always better to have founders pitch a product than a PR firm. It means a lot (to journalists) when an actual founder reaches out.
 8. **Give direct contact info and be quick.** Give your direct contact info and during the launch period, make sure you are always around to answer questions.
 9. **Ride a wave.** The best way to get press attention is to ride the wave of an already big trend being talked about.
 10. **Try to make a connection beforehand.** Do try to make a personal connection beforehand so the intro is warm when you are finally making a pitch.
 11. **Exclusives can help but are tricky.** TechCrunch and other blogs often like to get exclusives, but it also hurts your chances with other blogs. Make sure you use it for the right purpose and at the right time.
 12. **Don't copy and paste.** For the love of God, do not mail merge or copy and paste a pitch to a journalist. Yes, you can reuse some parts of the pitch, such as what you do, but keep things at a personal level.
 13. **Follow up.** If they *do* show interest, make sure you're on the ball. If they forget to follow up, make sure you get them the info they need and get the article to press.
 14. **Offer something to readers.** One goal of a writer is to provide utility to his readers. By offering access to an app that is hard to come by elsewhere, the story certainly provides utility.
 15. **Stunts can be the firestarter.** Stunts aren't a sustainable way to do press, but they can certainly get the momentum going for a company. One of the most famous examples to this day is Half.com renaming Halfway, Oregon, to Half.com.
 16. **Leverage your contacts.** Odds are, you know someone who knows someone at a press outlet and can give you an endorsement.
- by Jason L. Baptiste (Onswipe)^[47]

Point-of-Purchase Optimization

Granted, your point of purchase will vary depending on the type of product you sell. However, one common idea remains: whatever this point of purchase is, you need to communicate your brand in a way that makes the

sale. Agreed? Now let's see how it's done:

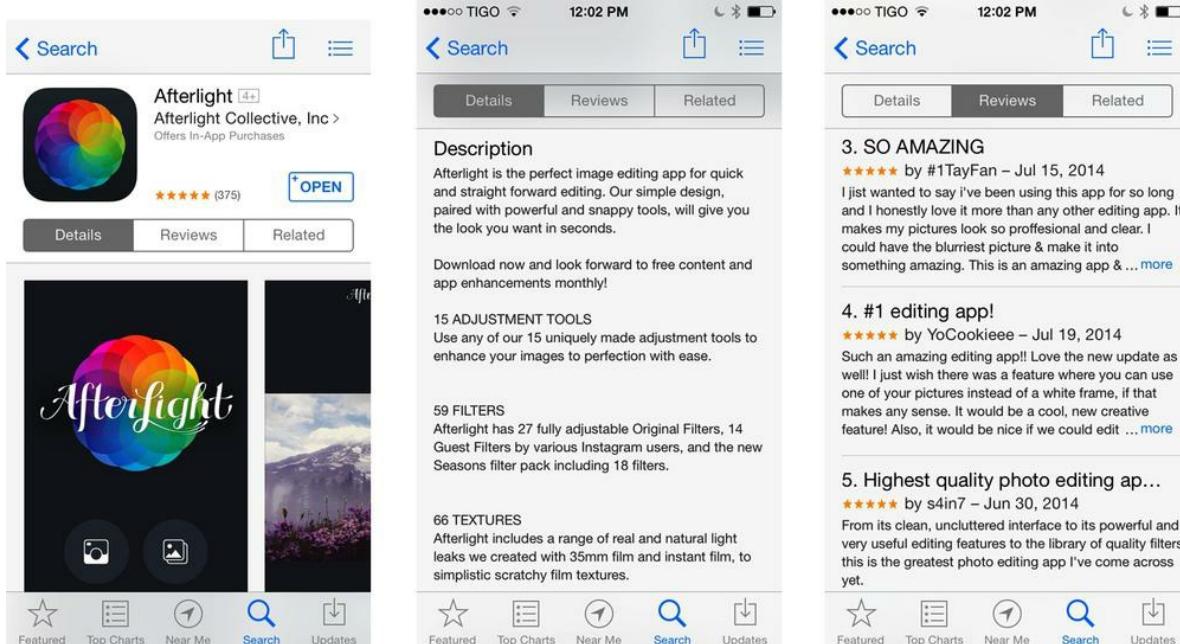
- Make it easy for customers to see your price.
- Show customers why you are better than competitors surrounding you.
- Show customers what other customers think.
- Show customers how you'll respond if something goes wrong.
- Show customers what they should expect from your brand during use.

In a nutshell:

Do everything in your power to make customers go confidently in the direction of their purchase intention.

The following screenshots, for example, are a typical iPhone user's first impressions of a photography app called Afterlight. The potential buyer is introduced to a series of key product features and attractive screenshots that display the app's full capabilities. Afterlight's reviews section also helps close the sale: customers rave about their favorite options and filters, one of them even claiming that it was "worth every cent I've spent."

In case you're also branding a mobile app, you may want to take a look at the next "Dig Deeper" sidebar, which explains a few tips related to app store optimization.



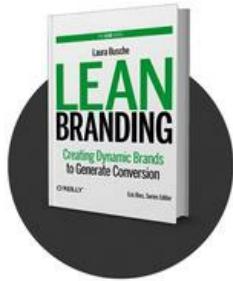
DIG DEEPER: APP STORE OPTIMIZATION

According to Nielsen's Mobile Media Report (Q3, 2011), iOS App Store and Google Play Store users discover new apps mainly through 1) search, and 2) recommendations from family and friends. Therefore, doing everything in your power to make your app easy to find is a no-brainer.

We already discussed search engine optimization, and app store optimization is basically the same theory applied to app store search engines. Here are some tips to improve your chances of being found in app marketplaces:

- Use keywords on your app title.
- Use keywords in your app description, and if the marketplace asks you to fill out a "keywords" field, use them here, too.
- Stimulate ratings and comments. Tell family and friends to download, rate, and comment to get a solid base to build upon.
- Make sure that your app icon is attractive and recognizable.
- Use screenshots to show users your app's core benefits and most unique UI features.
- Invest in app marketing to increase downloads: implement paid advertising and the other strategies outlined in this chapter to grow your user base. The volume of downloads can also help your app rank higher in marketplace search.

DO EVERYTHING
in your power to make
customers go confidently
in the direction of their
purchase intention.



Partnerships

It's time to get some help. Good partnerships can expand your reach and associate your brand with positive values that others have already been building for a long time. Partnerships take many forms:

- **Partner with consumers.** If people are already buying and loving your brand, they can help by sharing with others and commissioning along the way. This is called *affiliate marketing*.
- Amazon Associates, for example, is a widely successful affiliate program that rewards site owners for every purchase made through special links that are strategically placed inside Amazon's content. According to Amazon, the program offers the possibility to "earn up to 10% advertising fees with a trusted e-commerce leader."^[48]
- **Partner with celebrities.** The celebrity is credible, represents a series of values (that your brand aligns with), and has a wide, fitting audience. Why not boost your brand conversion with that persuasion power? Celebrities who endorse your brand are often called *brand ambassadors*. Read the next "Dig Deeper" sidebar to learn more about these ambassadors and what psychology has to say about their role.

In our world, bloggers have become celebrities in their own right. They have now amassed large audiences and have a significant influence on these consumers' purchase decisions. In 2014, Target launched a new entertaining and party collection designed by Joy Cho, the blogger behind the widely popular *Oh Joy*: an online publication focused on "design, fashion, food, and joyful moments from everyday life."^[49] This partnership made sense for both brands, since their values and personalities align and so do their target audiences.

- **Partner with other brands.** *Cobranding* means you and a related brand begin to communicate within the same context. When both of your brands' values align and your audiences coincide, it can be a great strategy to multiply your reach. Some brands partner by bundling two products that go together naturally, like a sub sandwich and a drink, or hardware and software. Think about brands that would make great allies.

In 2012, Moleskine and Evernote joined forces to produce Evernote Smart Notebooks, a special edition of Moleskine's renowned notebooks that integrates seamlessly with Evernote's mobile app to allow you to "capture the pages of your notebook with your smartphone or tablet."^[50] Evernote has also secured strategic brand alliances with Post-it notes.

- **Partner with the press.** Does your brand stand strong behind a message that a particular media outlet is trying to push? Think about key topics where your team can offer its expertise and pitch its product at the same time. Media outlets like Mashable and Buzzfeed have recognized their unique power to amplify other brands' messages.

DIG DEEPER: BRAND AMBASSADORS AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

You may think that your product is so outstanding that it does not need any visible public figure to endorse it. However, even great products can use shortcuts to speed up their rate of diffusion. Brand ambassadors can provide such a shortcut to stimulate conversion. These highly visible individuals can encourage faster adoption by displaying your brand in use to the thousands of eyes observing their moves. The imitation effect that follows has an explanation in [social learning theory](#).

In 1977 psychologist Albert Bandura introduced a highly influential idea about how we learn:

Most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example.^[51]

Partnering with an influential individual whose personal brand values align with yours may speed up your product's rate of adoption. To get started, ask yourself the following questions: *Who would embody my brand's values best, and be most successful at portraying how my product or service works? How could we introduce our brand in this person's lifestyle in a creative way that will resonate well with both of our audiences?*

In 2013, Mashable and Nissan joined forces to communicate the carmaker's unique user-generated content campaign. Nissan asked its social media followers to create videos using a printout of their Versa Note model. Mashable partnered up to feature nine of the best videos submitted by users in what became a popular article with over 5,000 shares.^[52] Recognizing the potential of brand-media partnerships, Mashable launched an initiative called BrandLab (mashablebrandlab.com) to help "clients become content creators and amplify their social media assets."^[53]

BRANDING ON STEROIDS: SIMPLE PARTNERSHIPS TO HACK GROWTH

- **Partner up through guest blogging!** Is there a company delivering value that your potential customers would appreciate? Get talking and set up an article or post to be published on its site.
- **Offer joint discounts.** Create a landing page where another brand's users get early (maybe even free?) access to some or all of your features.
- **Lure influencers.** Along the same lines, you could also partner up with influential people who have wide audiences and a positive reputation in the field you're trying to enter. Get reviews—the fun way. Use giveaways or small presents to ask influencers to actually review your product. These reviews contribute to positive word of mouth about the brand, and there goes your return on investment! In a world where social recommendations from friends and family influence most purchases, it is strategic to build rapport with a small group of brand advocates who can share their experience with others. There is no substitute for this firsthand knowledge about your product.
- **Use affiliate marketing.** Are any of your customers or stakeholders willing to help resell your product or service? Offer a commission for every new client they are able to bring in. Establish a solid relationship with your affiliates (also known as resellers) and make sure they have every tool they need to complete the sale.
- **Offer a freebie or referral program.** Allow your users to unlock features by inviting others. Give out a free premium account or some sort of token in exchange for recommendations. Encourage users to recommend your product or service to their peers (those in the same market segment). For instance: you'll want parents to recommend your parenting tool to other parents. Reckless singles are no good—they won't appreciate your product. It seems obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many people forget to include this in their referral wording.

Recap

Chapter 5 was all about building effective communication channels to grow your brand. Though there is no single list of communication tactics that will work for every brand, this chapter introduced a basic list of ingredients: social media marketing, landing pages, search engine optimization, content marketing (blogging), paid advertising, email marketing, brand videos, review systems, public relations, point-of-purchase optimization, and brand partnerships.

These ingredients are important because they help you acquire customers and guide them down some desired action path (purchase, sign up, vote, and subscribe, among others). In building your brand's communication channels, the idea of “showing, not telling” will *constantly* save you. Also important is the difference between providing convenience versus interruption. If we are to participate as brands in social networks populated by humans, the conversation should feel *opportune, humane, and organic*. Is your brand interrupting or adding value through its online presence?

The single most important question in the business universe is probably *So what?* Make sure to provide a compelling answer to this question throughout your brand's communication channels. Then *do everything in your power to make customers go confidently in the direction of their purchase intention.*

[41] VisionCritical, “From Social to Sale: 8 Questions to Ask Your Customers” (white paper), <http://www.visioncritical.com/social2sale>.

[42] Maeve Duggan and Aaron Smith, “Social Media Update 2013,” Pew Research Center, January 2014, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Social-Media-Update.aspx>.

[43] This table takes note of the demographic characteristics that the Pew Social Media Update reported as displaying a statistically significant difference.

[44] I do have a preference for Hootsuite, but this choice is entirely up to you and your business objectives. Hootsuite’s free version has everything that you need to get started.

[45] Bitly blog, “Time Is on Your Side,” May 8, 2012, <http://bitly.is/1qWGwI9>.

[46] “Subject Line Comparison: The Best and Worst Open Rates on MailChimp,” MailChimp, <http://bit.ly/1kIoBHg>.

[47] Read more at <http://jasonlbaptiste.com/>. Jason L. Baptiste is currently the CMO and cofounder of Onswipe, a platform for tablet publishing and advertising.

[48] <https://affiliate-program.amazon.com/>

[49] Joy Cho, “Big News: Oh Joy for Target Collection Coming March 16!” Oh Joy blog. February 10, 2014, http://ohjoy.blogs.com/my_weblog/2014/02/oh-joy-target.html.

[50] <http://bit.ly/1kIt6Sn>

[51] Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (New York: General Learning Press, 1977), 305–316.

[52] “9 Fast and Furious Vine and Instagram Videos,” Mashable, August 12, 2013, <http://mashable.com/2013/08/12/versavid-winners/>.

[53] “Mashable Partners with Nissan for #VersaVid Contest,” Mashable BrandLab, August 12, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1kItq3y>.

Part III. Measure

I'm a huge Socrates fan. The thought of someone actually looking at the world and saying, "You know, though I've been learning all these years, I declare myself absolutely ignorant."

Brilliant.

(His actual words: *I know one thing: that I know nothing.*)

We have been working on building a brand in the last few chapters, but it's time to wear the Socrates hat. Let's detach ourselves from the work that we just created and start grinding it to the core—no strings attached.

So far, we've empathized with our consumers (see Research, in [Chapter 4](#)) and drawn from our team's creative input to build the brand components that will represent us in the marketplace. But the reality is that until these "brand building blocks" are tested, they remain assumptions.

From now on, we will make use of the following Brand Learning Log to capture the process of testing each of our components. At this point, let's focus on the "To Measure" and "Measuring" sections ([Part IV](#) will deal with "Measured").

BRAND LEARNING LOG

TO MEASURE 			MEASURING 		MEASURED 		DATE 
BRANDING COMPONENT	BRANDING ASSUMPTION	CONVERSION GOAL	METRIC TO WATCH	EXPECTED RESULT	ACTUAL RESULT	WHAT WE LEARNED	WHEN WE LEARNED IT

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This tool will help you keep track of what you've assumed, measured, and learned during this Lean Branding process. Eric Ries introduced the term *validated learning* in *The Lean Startup*, claiming that startups “exist to learn how to build a sustainable business. This learning can be validated scientifically by running frequent experiments that allow entrepreneurs to test each element of their vision.”^[54]

Branding is not an exception to this idea. Validated brand learning is the key to the Lean Branding approach. As we move on with the remaining chapters, keep this idea close to heart:

Lean brands are the result of continually testing assumptions.

Throughout **Part III**, we will take a look at the tools that you can use to test these branding assumptions and how to use the Brand Learning Log to keep track of the process. **Part IV** will show you how to pivot in response to these tests.

Testing for What?

This is an excellent question. The truth of the matter is that unless we know what we’re aiming for, it becomes painfully difficult to measure what will get us there. In Henry Kissinger’s words:

If you don’t know where you are going, every road will get you nowhere.

Similarly:

If you don’t know what you’re aiming for, metrics will tell you nothing.

“What you’re aiming for” is a desired action path that you intend consumers to follow. Back in [Part II](#), we discussed the importance of placing calls to action (CTAs) to guide consumers. Although these CTAs are usually inserted in brand communication pieces like landing pages, one-sheets, social media profiles, and business cards, brand symbols can also be tested to determine whether they trigger a desired course of action. Actually, we will see how a brand’s symbols, story, and strategy can be tested and pivoted throughout the following three chapters.

Conversion is what we call this idea of a “desired action path,” the “what we’re aiming for” of this story. As you can imagine, conversion stands for different things to different brands. The first step as you approach brand measurement is to ask yourself:

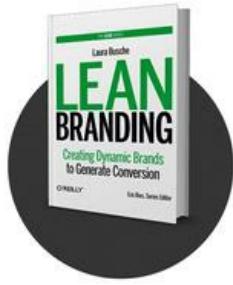
What are we trying to get consumers to do here?

Once you’ve established these conversion goals (as we will call them from now on), it is important to find a feasible way to see if you’ve actually reached them. You must ask yourself a second question:

How will we know that we’ve succeeded?

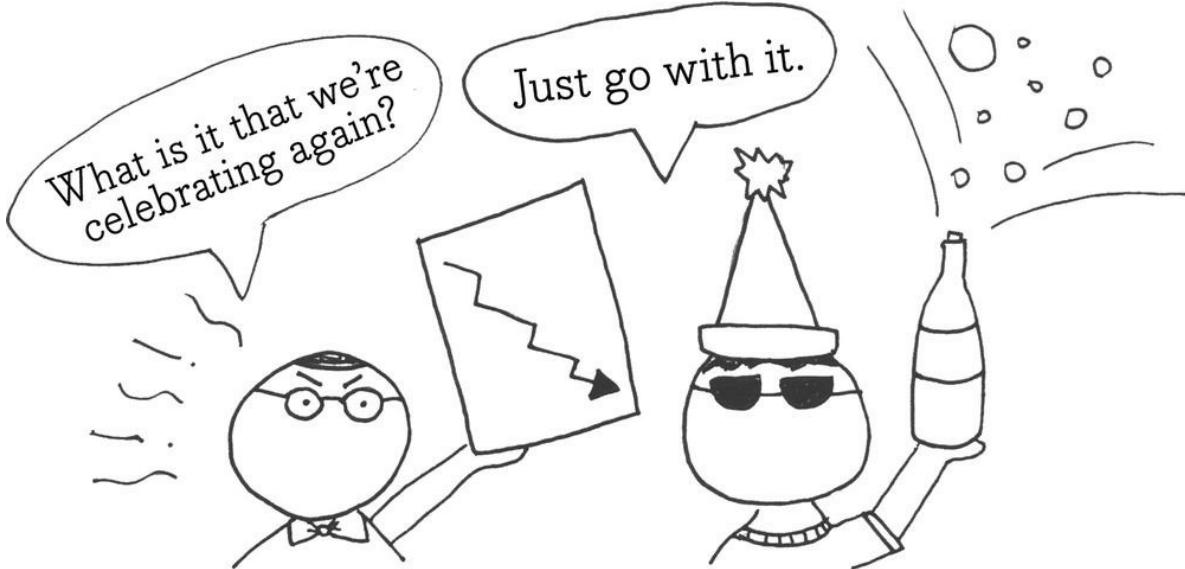
The answer to this question will come in the form of *metrics*. Brand metrics. Relevant metrics. The kind of data that truly tells us something in this vast jungle of...well...data.

LEAN BRANDS
are the result of continually
testing assumptions.



Hold Off on the Champagne

*I can't stress this enough: unless you know which metrics are meaningful to you, based on what you're trying to get consumers to do (conversion goals), data will overwhelm you. Numb you. You will find yourself celebrating faux successes and overlooking genuine milestones. Eric Ries has his own term for these "faux success" metrics: *vanity metrics*.^[55]*



Vanity metrics can lead to an unfortunate waste of champagne—and resources, of course.

Unlike vanity metrics, actionable metrics lead to informed business decisions. They reflect the true drivers of your business. They tell us *something* about the way our revenue streams are growing, halting, or shrinking.

What Drives My Business?

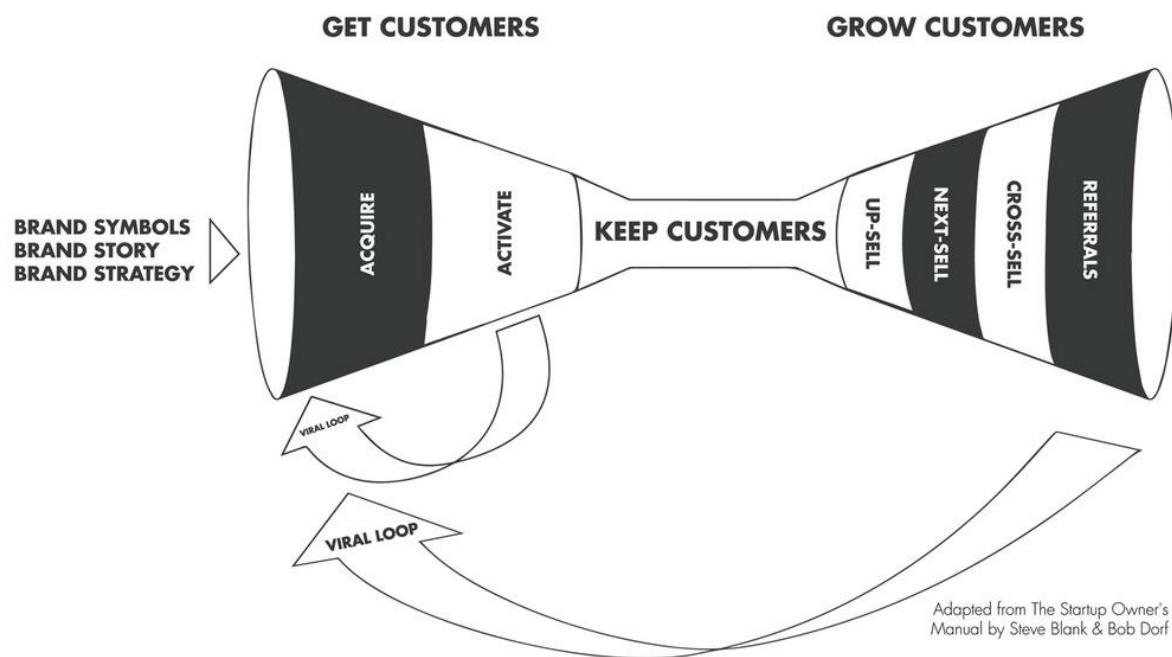
Regardless of the industry you're in or the business model you've created, there seems to be a universal idea of what drives business:

Customers, in all sizes and colors, drive businesses.

Companies, advertisers, final users, governments, organizations: customer relationships are the heart of any business. Getting, keeping, and growing them, therefore, becomes our inescapable mission.

In *The Startup Owner's Manual*, Steve Blank and Bob Dorf introduce a path to "Get, Keep, and Grow" customers. According to the authors:

- **Getting customers**, sometimes called *demand creation*, drives customers into your chosen sales channel(s).
- **Keeping customers**, or *retention*, gives customers reasons to stick with the company and product.
- **Growing customers** involves selling them more of what they've bought as well as new and different products and encourages them to refer new customers.^[56]



The brand symbols, story, and strategy that we have been building are meant to guide your customers down this conversion path. This is what we'll be looking out for:

Brand traction (Chapter 6)

Does our brand communication strategy trigger conversion?

Brand resonance (Chapter 7)

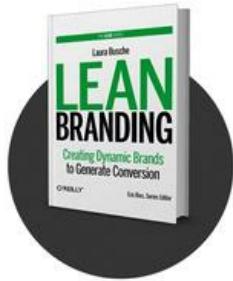
Does our brand story resonate well enough with our audience to draw them in?

Brand identity (Chapter 8)

Are our brand symbols sending the right messages to attract our target audience?

Ready for the taste tests? This section will be all about conducting the right experiments to determine whether our brand components trigger conversion, guiding our customers down the get-keep-grow funnel just described.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW
what you're aiming for,
*metrics will tell you
nothing.*



[54] Eric Ries, *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses* (New York: Crown Business, 2011).

[55] Ries, *The Lean Startup*.

[56] Steve Blank and Bob Dorf, *The Startup Owner's Manual: The Step-by-Step Guide for Building a Great Company* (Pescadero, CA: K & S Ranch, Inc., 2012), 126.

Chapter 6. Brand Traction

If you've been around the startup world for long enough, the word *traction* should sound painfully familiar. It seems like investments, press coverage, and—quite honestly—*sleep* hang on the thread of whether you “reach traction” or not.

Consider a horse-drawn carriage for a moment. These ancient vehicles have been used by human beings for everything from warfare to transportation. Horse-drawn carriages are based on a principle called *animal traction*: they are pulled around using the power of one or more horses. This idea is at the heart of the original definition of *traction*: the state of being drawn or pulled. [\[57\]](#)

Just as horses pull carriages to specified locations, market demand should draw your product or service into a place of growth. When others ask about your traction, they actually want to get a sense of the market’s reaction to your product. In the words of investor Naval Ravikant, “Traction is quantitative evidence of end-user demand.”[\[58\]](#)

Now every time you think of traction, ask yourself:

Is the market pulling my brand toward growth?

Who is doing the pulling?

How hard are they pulling?

Chapter 5 was all about building an effective brand communications strategy by using different channels to send our message across. This chapter will now walk you through the process of *measuring* the traction that each of those communications strategy components generates for your brand.



Investors and other actors in the startup ecosystem have come up with a seemingly endless list of indicators that answer these questions. Some of the most common include:

- How profitable the business is
- How many active, registered, and/or paying users you have
- How fast this user base has grown in a period of time
- How many registered users are converting to paid users
- How the average contract with your paid users has grown
- How much it costs to acquire a new user
- What is the value of each user to your business over the user's lifetime
- How much revenue you've made thus far

- How fast this revenue has grown in a period of time
- How much engagement you've generated with the product or service
- How many partnerships you've consolidated
- How much traffic you generate
- How fast this traffic has grown in a period of time
- How much of this traffic is returning
- (So many more)

You and I are fortunate enough to live in an era where brand communication channels can be measured for impact. In the past, brand communications strategies were virtually immeasurable, and their impact on some of the indicators you've just seen couldn't be determined accurately.

There seemed to be a giant abyss between whatever brand strategy companies built and the “hard” results that kept them going. What better way to determine if the market is pulling than measuring its immediate reaction to our brand strategy? Thanks to advanced analytics technologies, this is no longer impossible. They built a bridge between branding investments and their returns. Whoever thinks there's still an abyss is dangerously stuck in the past.



Conversion is the action of leading customers down a desired action path, and *traction* is a quantitative measure of how hard they are pulling your product or service. To understand if our communications strategies stimulate conversion, we will measure how much of a “pull” they are generating. We will examine how strongly the audience is reacting to our product or service as evidenced in these communications channels and the relationship of these indicators with conversion—our main goal.

Like traction, conversion is often defined differently based on the industry and business model you’ve decided to pursue. In other words, what means *winning* for one brand doesn’t necessarily mean anything for the next.

Consider a fashion blog that sells advertising space. Obtaining more visitors and page views will drive an increase in ad revenue; therefore, metrics related to traffic affect the blog’s core business. On the other hand, a paid membership site might look at traffic data and see an incomplete picture unless something indicates how many of these visitors are becoming paid members; that is, how many are *converting*.

Whatever tests we decide to run and numbers we decide to look at, there has to be a clear connection between your brand’s main revenue streams and what you’re measuring. Otherwise, we may fall in the trap of *vanity metrics*, as explained in the introduction to this section.

Back in **Part II**, we built a set of brand strategy components that we will learn to measure throughout this chapter. Let’s review them:

- Social media marketing
- Landing pages
- Search engine optimization
- Content marketing: blogging
- Paid advertising
- Email list

- Video
- Review systems
- Media relations
- Point-of-purchase optimization
- Partnerships

Our goal in **Chapter 6** will be to answer the question:

Does our brand communication strategy trigger conversion?

Let's go back and update our Brand Learning Log for a moment:

TO MEASURE 			MEASURING 		MEASURED 		DATE
BRANDING COMPONENT	BRANDING ASSUMPTION	CONVERSION GOAL	METRIC TO WATCH	EXPECTED RESULT	ACTUAL RESULT	WHAT WE LEARNED	WHEN WE LEARNED IT
Social Media Landing Page SEO Paid Advertising Email List Marketing Video Public Relations Blogging POP Optimization Review Systems Partnerships							

One of the first challenges you will face when filling out this log is that second column that reads Branding Assumption. You will stare at it for minutes and have absolutely no idea how to fill it out. You will be tempted to leave it blank and proceed to watch out for metrics and test results.

Do yourself a favor and think *hard* about this one. One of the biggest problems in developing lean startups is our inability to take distance from our own mindset and realize what we are assuming. Take social media, for example. You might think that there is no underlying branding assumption behind opening a fan page and updating it. False. There are actually several assumptions (hypotheses) there:

- Facebook is the right platform to reach my audience.

- If I publish X type of content, my users will click through.
- If I publish X type of content about X topic, my users will engage.
- Facebook will help me bring in new customers.

Be sure to filter out every supposition that you are bringing to the table because it is the only way we will be able to test it. Renowned psychologist Ivan Pavlov said it well:

While you are experimenting, do not remain content with the surface of things. [59]

Moving forward, write down these assumptions on your Brand Learning Log and design tests to validate or invalidate them.

Designing Tests

At their most basic level, all tests involve:

- A statement (assumption, hypothesis) that needs to be validated
- An indicator that we will measure to validate it
- A level of that indicator that will tell us if it is true or false (an expected result)
- The real level of that indicator, as measured by us (an actual result)
- The result of comparing the expected result with the actual result

Take this example:

TO MEASURE 			MEASURING 		MEASURED 		DATE
BRANDING COMPONENT	BRANDING ASSUMPTION	CONVERSION GOAL	METRIC TO WATCH	EXPECTED RESULT	ACTUAL RESULT	WHAT WE LEARNED	WHEN WE LEARNED IT
Social Media	Videos are an effective way to get our audience to share our content on Facebook	More content sharing to amplify our brand's reach in social media	Video shares	1000 shares per video	1030 shares per video	Videos are an effective way to get our audience to share our content on Facebook	6/6/2012

Now, here's an interesting feature of the Brand Learning Log. If a new content format were to come out, something even more engaging than video, this What We Learned becomes a testable hypothesis all over again.

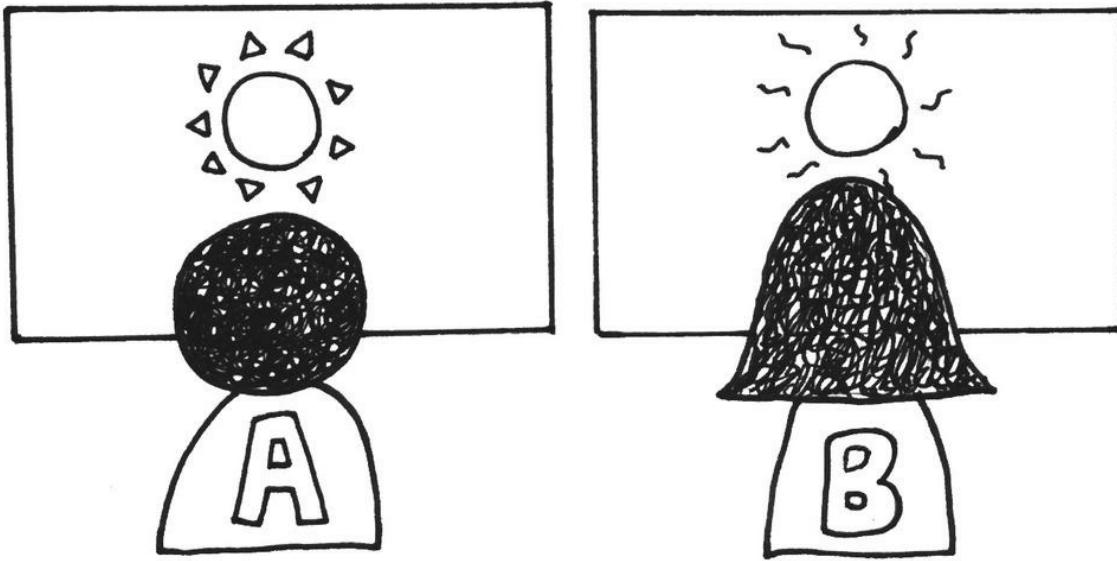
When you keep track of the assumptions that you've tested and record *when* this test happened, it becomes easier to see how current your results are. If you were to hand down this process to someone else on your team, it would also save him time and effort by elucidating the lessons learned so far.

Split Testing: Tell Me Why

Say you've tested a particular version of your landing page and, based on the metrics you are watching and the results you were expecting, it doesn't quite pass the test. What on earth could be wrong? That's a question for [split testing](#). Split testing is a type of experiment that rolls out a different version of the component that you are trying to test to different groups. It is sometimes called *A/B testing* precisely because there is an A group and a B group.

Now, why would anyone want an A group and a B group? The whole point of this experiment is to figure out what exactly is behind a given component's success or failure. Would you be able to state that for sure if *everyone* saw the same component? What if everyone saw two entirely *new* versions of the component? Would that tell you *anything* about the original one's performance? Wouldn't it be smarter to show a different version to one group

and have another group stick to the original one? The group that will be exposed to the original version is what we call a *control group* in research; the other one is called a *test group*. The different “versions” that we show them are called *treatments*. (I thought I should point that out, considering this kind of terminology is what usually throws us off from using these powerful tools.)



You can have more than one test group, but remember to test only one treatment at a time. (Unless you want to be clueless about their individual impact. In which case, go ahead.)

Experiment Phobia

All of us have dealt with this at some point. Thinking about experiments brings to mind a combination of Erlenmeyer flasks, some sort of lab explosion, and/or a white robe. We don't think we were born the “experimenter type.”

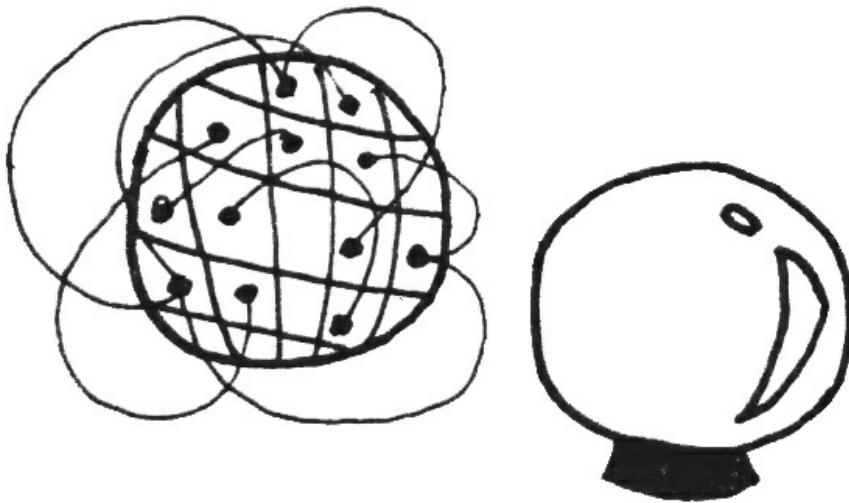
Here's a word on experiments: at their most basic level, we are all “naturally wired” to conduct them. Curiosity is part of our DNA, and it's time you put it to work for you. Filmmaker David Cronenberg described it well:

Everybody's a mad scientist, and life is their lab. We're all trying to experiment to find a way to live, to solve problems, to fend off madness and chaos. [\[60\]](#)

Designing experiments will allow us to test our branding assumptions, see which work, and move on with those that do. For the rest of the chapter, we will tackle designing tests for each of the components of our brand communications strategy (built back in [Chapter 5](#)). Every section includes a list of items to test and some of the tools that can help you get it done.

Landing Page: How to Test

As soon as your brand's landing page is online, you will want to track analytics with your preferred service provider. *Analytics* is the word we use to describe data analysis. Because (almost) every online interaction can be tracked, there is an immense ocean of data available to us. Analytics packages help us make sense out of this data and, as you'll see throughout this chapter, make informed decisions.



Using analytics is like looking at the fuzzy World Wide Web through a crystal ball.

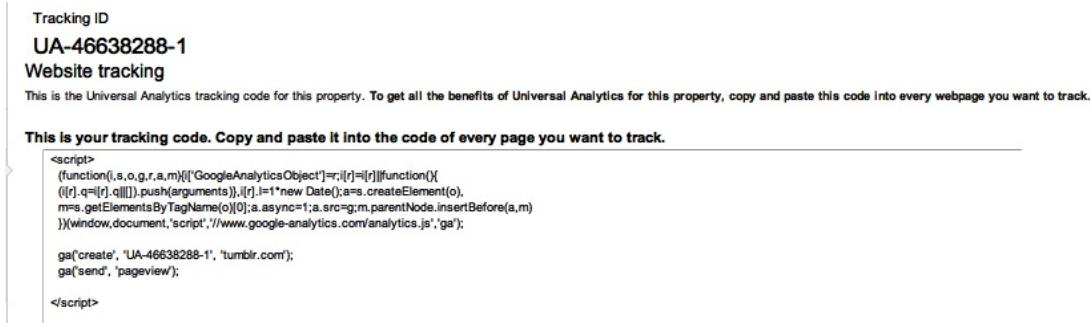
For the purpose of this book, we will be using a basic Google Analytics package because you can get started with an outstanding set of features for free. Once you get a hold of things and start feeling the need for advanced

functions, there's a wide array of paid analytics options to consider. Most of these options are actually integrated with Google Analytics and are meant to be used in conjunction. Here are some of the most popular tools to test landing pages:

- Google Analytics
- Hubspot
- Optimizely
- KISSMetrics

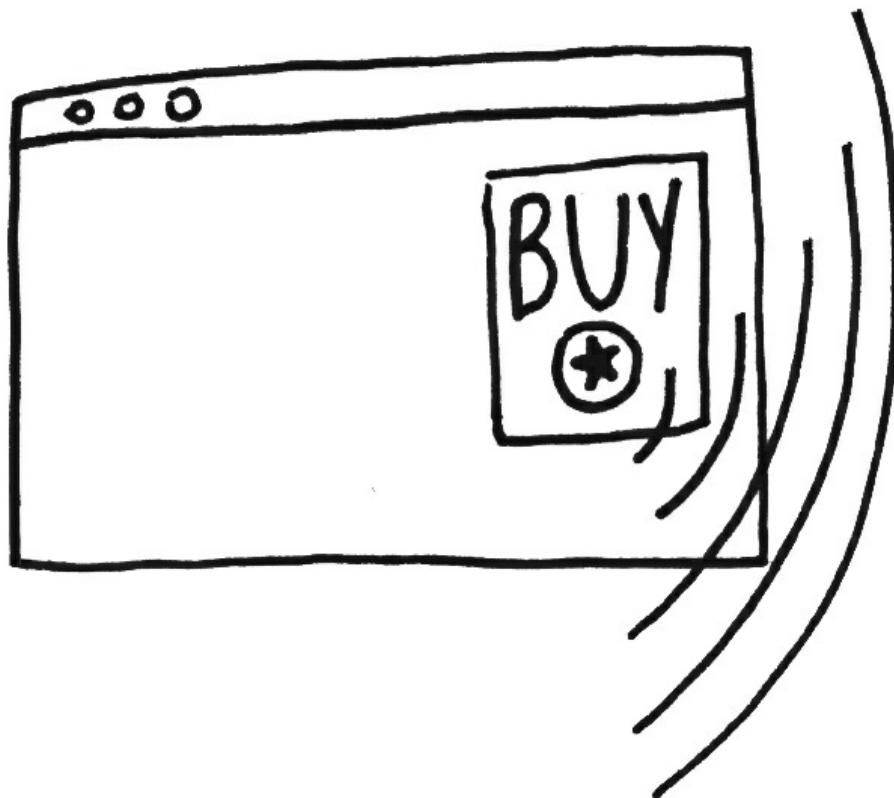
Let's get started installing Google Analytics in your site:

1. Go to <http://www.google.com/analytics/> and log in with your Google account.
2. Click on “Sign up” to create a Google Analytics account.
3. Now tell Google what your new account’s name is. The way the structure works is: you (a single user) can control several accounts (companies, brands, or groups of sites—however you want to see it) that contain one or more properties (individual sites with tracking IDs). So think about it as follows:



4. Agree to the Terms of Service.
5. Google will offer several ways to insert a small piece of code in your website. This piece of code allows it to track online activity related to

your site, and once you install it, you will be able to access Google Analytics' exceptional toolkit. Discuss what is the best way to integrate this code with your developer (or make up your mind, if that developer is you).



Google Analytics lets you visualize data related to your audience demographics, behavior, and devices, among many others. The amount of information can be overwhelming. That's why I created a Google Analytics dashboard that displays the basic set of metrics we will be looking at throughout this book. You can download the Lean Branding Google Analytics dashboard at leanbranding.com/resources.

1 Goal description

Name

Goal ID 1 / Goal Set 1

Type

Destination ex: thanks.html
 Duration ex: 5 minutes or more
 Pages/Screens per visit ex: 3 pages
 Event ex: played a video

Next step Cancel

2 Goal details

Creating Goals with Google Analytics

Remember the conversion goals that we introduced earlier? Our objective is to examine how strongly the audience is reacting to our product or service as evidenced in these communications channels and the relationship of these indicators with conversion—our main goal.

Luckily, Google Analytics can handle our goals and let us know how we're doing if we just let it know what to look out for. Let's go ahead and set them up:

1. Take the *leanbranding.com* example. Every time a visitor becomes a new subscriber, she will land in a page called *leanbranding.com/thank you*. Because our objective is to test which version of our headline converts more subscribers, we select Destination and tell Google to track whenever someone lands on our Thank You site in the next step. There are other ways to track user behavior, such as duration, pages per visit, or events visitors engaged in. This time, we are setting up a destination type of goal.

 **Goal description** [Edit](#)
Name: *Subscriber Conversion*
Goal type: *Destination*

2 Goal details

Destination

Equals to Case sensitive
For example, use *My Screen* for an app and */thankyou.html* instead of *www.example.com/thankyou.html* for a web page

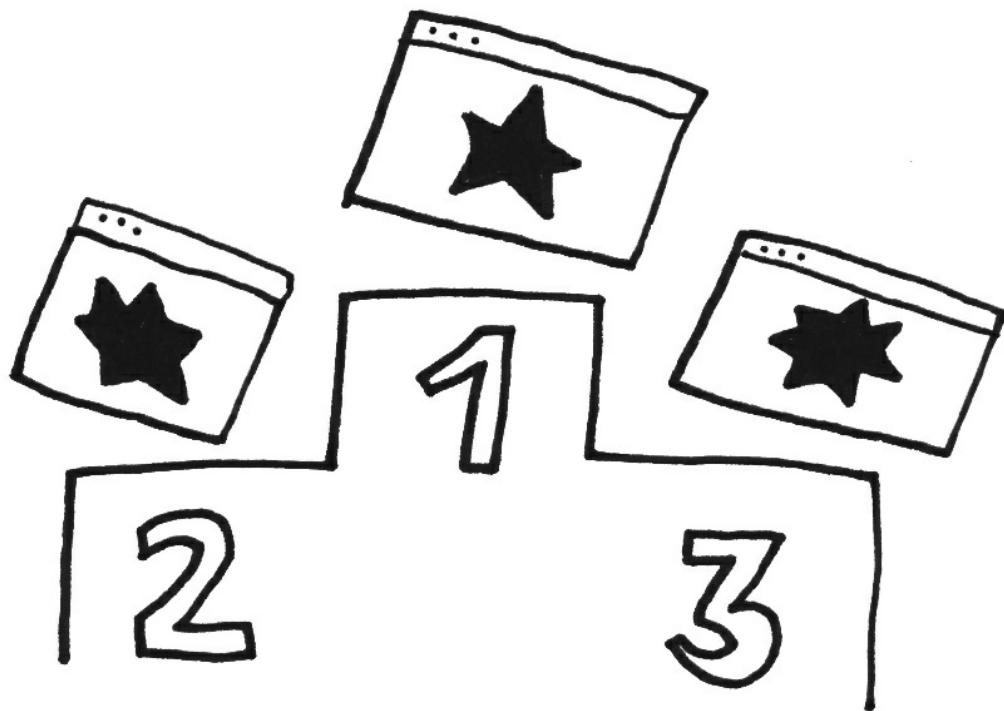
Value OPTIONAL
 Off Assign a monetary value to the conversion.

Funnel OPTIONAL
 Off Specify a path you expect traffic to take towards the destination. Use it to analyze the entrance and exit points that impact your Goal.

Verify this Goal See how often this Goal would have converted based on your data from the past 7 days.

Create Goal **Cancel**

2. In Goal Details, we will tell Google where our users should land for us to be able to say that they converted. In this example, that URL is the Thank You page.



3. Click on Create Goal, and you're all set.

Creating A/B Experiments with Google Analytics

From your dashboard, look at the left menu and click on Experiments under the Behavior section. Remember what we discussed earlier about testing which version of your site works best to fulfill your conversion goals? This tool makes it easy to distribute one version of your landing page (treatment) to Group A and a different one to Group B. Google handles the experiment for you and lets you know which is the “winner version.”

TO MEASURE			MEASURING		MEASURED		DATE
BRANDING COMPONENT	BRANDING ASSUMPTION	CONVERSION GOAL	METRIC TO WATCH	EXPECTED RESULT	ACTUAL RESULT	WHAT WE LEARNED	WHEN WE LEARNED IT
Landing Page	Version A of the site (with headline A) will convert more visitors to subscribers than Version B of the site (with headline B).	User subscriptions	New subscribers	Version A's new subscriber conversion rate will be higher than Version B's.	Version B's subscriber conversion rate is higher than Version A's.	Headline B is actually more effective at converting new subscribers.	6/6/2012

Let's look at a sample experiment design and how it would work in Google.

Sample experiment design

I want to figure out which version of *leanbranding.com* converts more subscribers to the weekly newsletter.

Content Experiments - Create a new experiment

1 Choose an experiment objective

Name for this experiment

A/B Testing Headline for Subscriber Conve

Objective for this experiment [?](#)

Goal 1 (Goal 1 Completions) [▼](#) [×](#) - or - [Create a new objective](#)

Percentage of traffic to experiment [?](#)

25% [▼](#)

Email notification for important changes

[OFF](#) [ON](#)

Advanced Options [?](#)

[Next Step](#)

[Save for Later](#)

[Discard](#)

Here is how to set up this experiment in “Google Analytics” language:

1. Name the experiment and tell Google what metric it should use to choose a winner. To do so, select the goal that Google must use to compare performance among the two (or more) versions of your landing page. In the last section, we created a conversion goal that defines success as “whenever someone subscribes to our newsletter.” In plain English, this means: “Here, Google—the way you’ll select the best landing page for us is by looking at how many new subscribers each one generates.” Let’s use that goal for this example.

The screenshot shows the 'Configure your experiment' step in Google Analytics. It displays two variations: 'Original Page' and 'Variation 1'. Each variation has a 'Web page to experiment' field containing 'leanbranding.com' and 'leanbranding.com/hello' respectively. The 'Name for the page' field for both variations contains 'Original' and 'Variation 1'. There is also a checkbox for 'Consolidate experiment for other content reports'. Below the variations, there is a '+ Add Variation' button and three buttons at the bottom: 'Next Step', 'Save for Later', and 'Discard'.

2. Google should be on the lookout for new subscribers generated by each version of the site (as defined by us before). That’s how the “winner” version will be selected. Indicate what percentage of your visitors should participate in this experiment. For this example, we wanted 25% of our visitors to be exposed in this case. In Advanced Options, you can also set up how long you’d like the experiment to run, among other details.

3. The next step in our experiment form is to point out which two versions Google should alternate for our visitors. To make this possible, you should have the original version of your landing page up in one URL and the alternate version in a different URL. In this example, we are testing two versions of the Lean Branding landing page by changing a single element: the main headline. While the original page reads “FINALLY: A DIY branding guide for startups that hate waste and love customers,” the variation reads “100+ DIY tactics to create, communicate and sell your brand—without the waste.”
4. Before the experiment starts, Google needs to be able to communicate with your site to let it know that we are doing some experimenting here. Again, that means inserting a piece of code in your site—specifically in the `<head>` section of the original version of your landing page.

3 Setting up your experiment code

How do you want to set up your experiment code?

Adding script code to your page (?)

1. Make sure your original and variation pages have Google Analytics tracking code installed.
2. Then, paste this experiment code immediately after the opening head tag at the top of your original page.

```
<!-- Google Analytics Content Experiment code -->
<script>function utmx_section(){function utmx(){}}(function(){var
k=74192570-0,d=document,l=d.location,c=d.cookie;
if(l.search.indexOf('utm_expid=' + k) > 0) return;
function f(n){if(c){var i=c.indexOf(n + '=');if(i > -1){var j=i.
indexOf(';', i);return escape(c.substring(i + n.length + 1, j < ?c.
length: j))}}}}var x=f('__utmx'),xx=f('__utmx'),h=l.hash;d.write(
'<sc><script src="' + (l.protocol == 'https:' ? s : ss +
'://www') + '.google-analytics.com/ga_exp.js?' + 'utmxxkey=' + k +
'&utmxx=' + (x ? x : '') + '&utmxxtime=' + new Date().valueOf() + (h ? '&utmxxhash=' + escape(h.substr(1)) : '') +
'" type="text/javascript" charset="utf-8"></sc></script>');
</script><script>utmxx('url', 'A/B');</script>
<!-- End of Google Analytics Content Experiment code -->
```

Additional information for your experiment code:

Experiment ID: f3Zhf0mWTm2fsmTnDyleuQ
Experiment Key: 74192570-0

Publish experiment pages

Publish your original and variation pages to the web.
When you're done - Click **Next Step** to continue.

After you have updated your pages with the experiment code, click **Next** to validate the code, review your configuration, and run the experiment.

You can also continue this setup at a later time.

FINDING OUR ACTIONABLE BRAND METRICS

REVENUE STREAM 	CONVERSION GOAL 	METRICS 	TESTS 	WHY IT MATTERS 
How do we generate income?	Which brand conversion goals relate to increasing this revenue stream?	What can we measure to know whether we've accomplished this goal?	What can we test to understand why we've succeeded or failed?	In plain English, why is this metric important for our business?

www.leanbranding.com

5. Google will make sure that everything's working well (with the code) and once that's verified, you just have to click on Start Experiment.

GET ON IT: BRANDING AN IOS OR ANDROID APP? CHECK OUT GOOGLE MOBILE APP ANALYTICS

Go to google.com/analytics/mobile/ and download the set of resources (SDK) to connect your mobile app with Google Analytics. You'll be able to create and track even more useful conversion goals, such as increasing the number of (mobile) landing page visitors who click through and download your app straight from the marketplace.

Other useful data provided by this tool includes app installations, active users, and demographics, screens and user engagement, crashes, and exceptions.^[61]

Landing Page: What to Test

Now that your experimenter confidence is up (right?), let's take a closer look at some of the most important landing page elements that we can test with

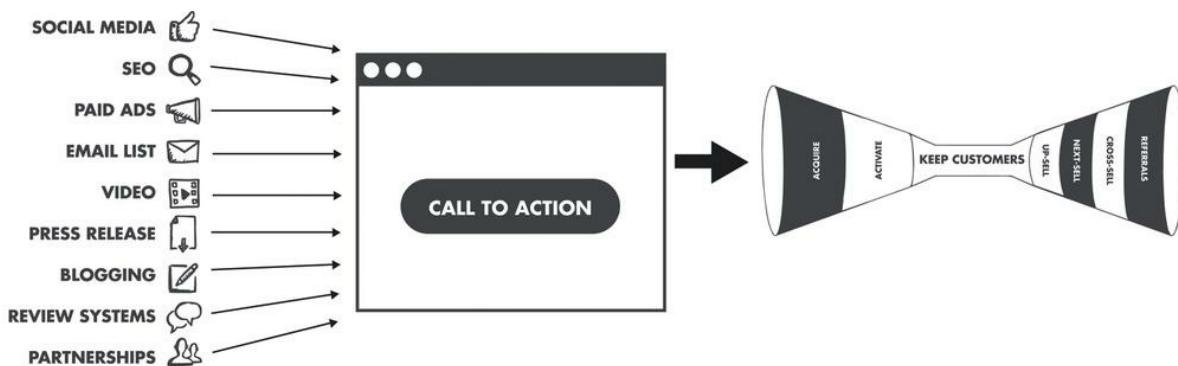
this tool:

- Headlines
- Copy
- Imagery
- Calls to action

How will we know whether each of these has succeeded or failed? That's where *actionable metrics* come in. The following table lists some examples of metrics, or indicators, that we can watch out for to make business-relevant decisions regarding our landing page. Use the template that follows the table to find which brand metrics make sense for your business model.

Revenue stream	Our brand conversion goal	What we can measure to know if we've succeeded (metrics)	What we can test to understand why we've succeeded (variations)	What it means in plain English
Paid memberships	Increase the number of landing page visitors who activate paid memberships	Percentage of total visitors who activate paid memberships	Headlines, copy, imagery, calls to action	Because paid memberships drive our business, we will measure the rate at which landing page visitors activate paid accounts, over time
Advertising sales	Increase the number of pages that each visitor sees	Pages per visit (also known as <i>average page depth</i>)	Headlines, copy, imagery, calls to action, inbound links, content format	Because ad sales drive our business, we will measure the amount of pages that each user visits, over time
Consulting services	Increase the number of subscribers to our weekly consulting newsletter	Percentage of total visitors who subscribe to our	Headlines, copy, imagery, calls to action,	Because we are in the business of selling consulting services, we will measure the amount of people who are interested in the topics we discuss and have

		newsletter	content format	subscribed to our thought leadership updates, over time
Digital product sales	Increase the number of landing page visitors who buy the product	Percentage of total visitors who buy the digital product	Headlines, copy, imagery, calls to action, feature lists, pricing tables	Because digital product sales drive our business, we will measure the rate at which landing page visitors buy and download our product, over time
App downloads	Increase the number of mobile landing page visitors who click through and download the app from a marketplace	Percentage of total app downloaders referred by the mobile landing page	Headlines, copy, imagery, calls to action, layout	Because app downloads drive our business, we will measure the percentage of downloads that have been triggered by visiting our (mobile) landing page

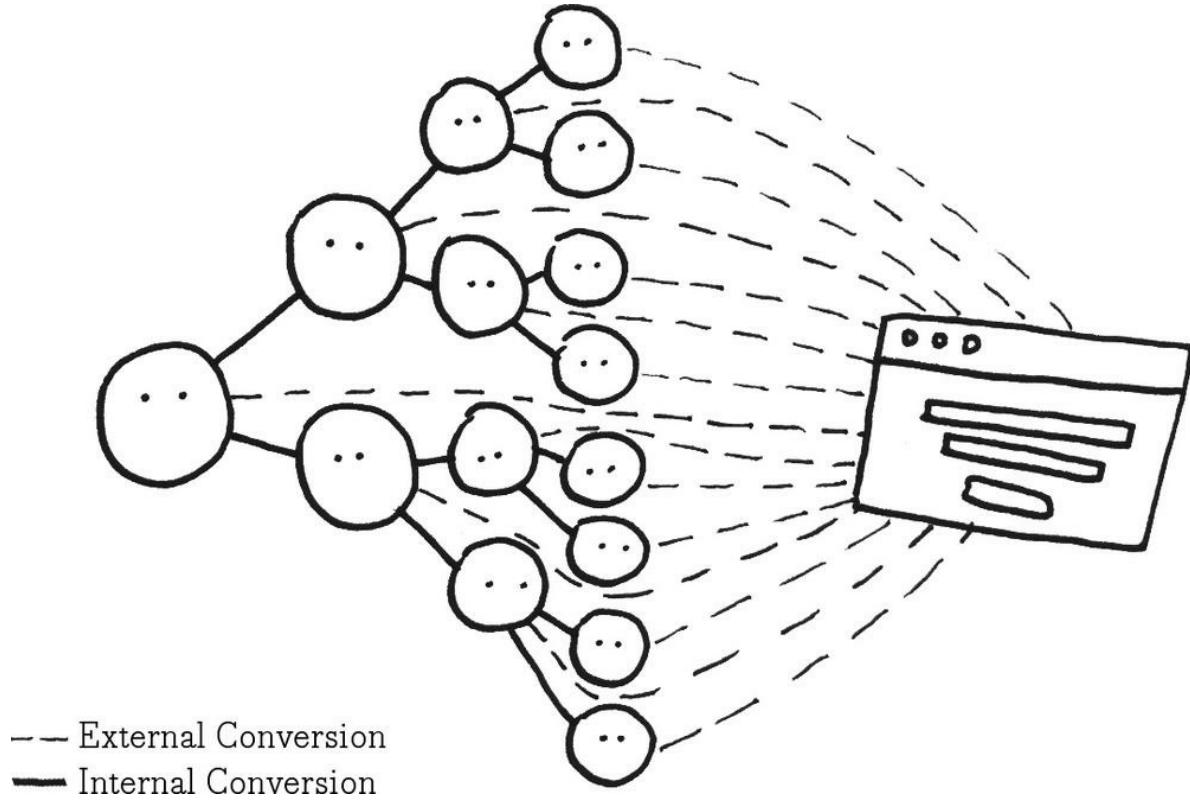


Why and How to Test Everything Else

Visualizing how landing pages take users down our desired action path (i.e., conversion) is rather straightforward. In essence, other brand communication tools and tactics—like social media, SEO, online advertising, blogging, and videos—generate traffic for the landing site where the final conversion is made. Therefore, to recognize their true impact in our conversion goals, we need to think of brand communications holistically. Put simply: it is crucial to look at (and understand!) the big picture.

In the big picture that I'm talking about, consumers hear your brand voice from multiple channels. They assimilate who you are and what you promise

based on numerous touchpoints. So many, in fact, that this big picture is ever-expanding and has become pretty chaotic during the last few years. For the purpose of this book, this is what the *huge* picture looks like.

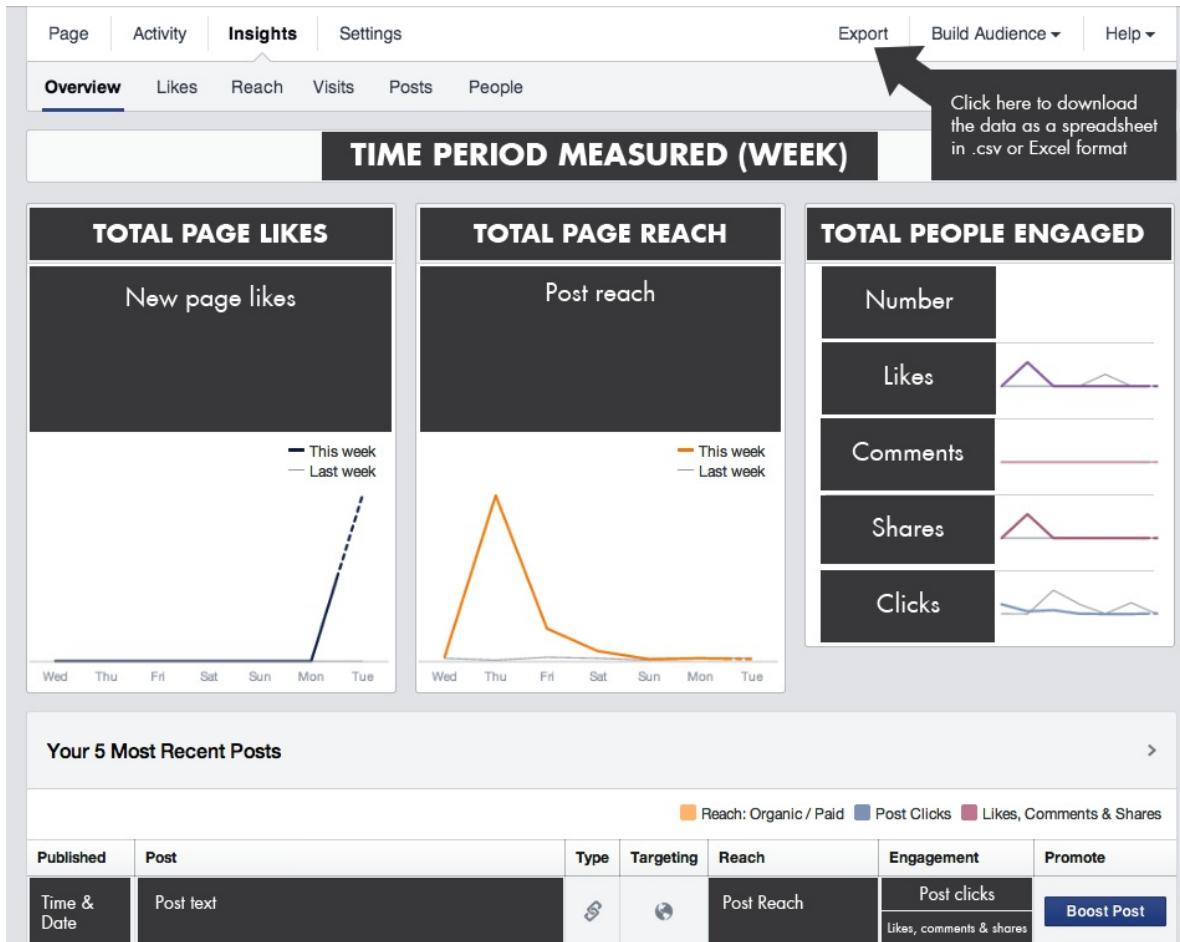


Social Media Marketing: How to Test

Social media's impact on conversion goals is twofold. On one hand, every time you publish content using a social network platform, you are actually rolling it out over a giant social graph. What this means is that every social network out there has some sort of feature that allows users to see what their friends have “liked” or interacted with. The end result is that whenever someone engages with your content, a part of his/her network is now exposed to it, too. This viral feedback loop ends up generating more social media followers for your brand.

On the other hand, social media posts can (and should!) connect to an external landing page where a defined conversion act can take place. Do you want to gain more subscribers? New users? Activate paid memberships?

Increase page views? All of these conversion goals can be achieved when social media content includes a clear call to action that takes users to the desired destinations.



Aside from their internal and external conversion effects, social media interactions have an increasingly important role in improving the way your brand is ranked in search engines. Algorithms, the rules that search engines follow when indexing sites, are starting to give more importance to a brand's social reputation. Think about the difference between a brand with 50,000 Google Plus followers and another one that is nowhere to be found on that network. Which one would you trust more? Search engines have also started thinking in this direction. We will discuss more about the impact of search engine optimization later in this chapter.

Now that you understand why social media has an impact in achieving conversion goals, let's explore some of the ways in which it can be measured.

Measuring internal conversion effect (i.e., how our social media interactions are contributing to activating more followers within the same network)	Measuring external conversion effect (i.e., how our social media interactions are contributing to generating conversion at an external landing page)
Post reach	Effectiveness of referrals (goal path)
Post engagements	Leads generated
New followers/fans	

Internal: Measuring Your Social Media Posts' Reach, Engagements, and Follower Count

Social media management systems like Hootsuite, Buffer, and Sprout Social are used to measure brand reach and engagement worldwide. Whenever a post is scheduled and sent, these platforms show us how well it has performed on a number of levels. In addition to third-party services, most major social network platforms offer their own analytics features. We will look closely at Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics, since these are the social networking sites with the most traffic.^[62]

As I've mentioned before, unless we know what we're digging for, *tools are just tools*. Before we venture into reading the reports that any of these platforms generate, let's define which metrics are *actionable* based on our business objectives and the conversion goals that we've designed to achieve them.

Revenue stream	Our brand conversion goal	What we can measure to know if we've succeeded (metrics)	What we can test to understand why we've succeeded (variations)	What it means in plain English
Paid memberships	Increase the number of potential customers who engage with social media posts related to our core value offer	Post engagement: Facebook: Likes, shares, clicks, and comments	Headline, imagery, call to action	Because paid memberships drive our business, we will measure how many potential customers engage with posts related to our core value offer

		Twitter: Faves, retweets, clicks, and replies		
--	--	---	--	--

Engagement can be a tricky word. Think of the last time you were *engaged* with something. You didn't just look at it; you actually *interacted* with it: expressing what you felt about it, sharing it with others, and/or giving it your approval. These simple actions, which may or may not be connected to your conversion goals, translate differently for every social network. It's important that we recognize these cues so that terminology doesn't get in the way of measurement.

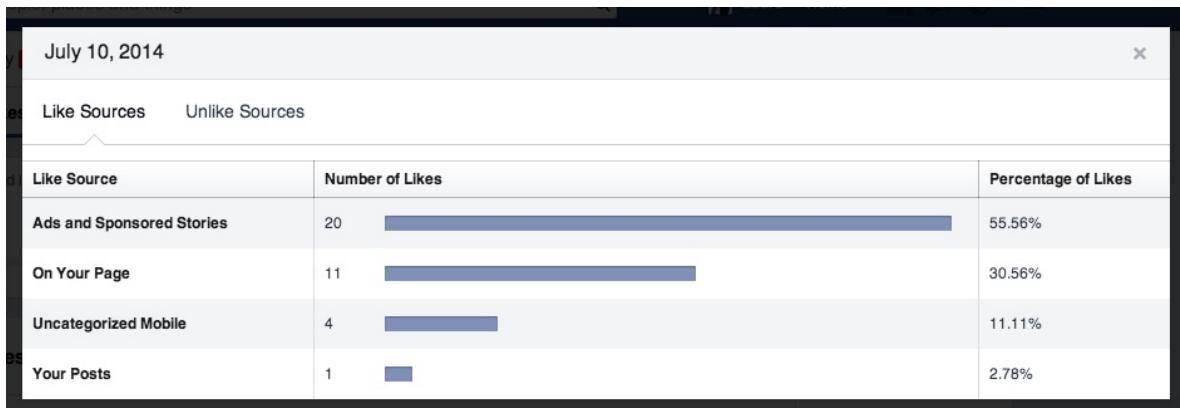
Equivalencies: How different social networks define metrics					
Platform	“Expressing your opinion”	“Sharing it with others”	“Giving it your approval”	“Clicking through”	“Joining you”
Facebook	Comments	Shares	Likes	Clicks	Fans
Twitter	Replies	Retweets	Faves	Clicks	Followers
Pinterest	Comments	Repins	Likes	Clicks	Followers
Instagram	Comments	(Interestingly enough, it hasn't rolled a “native” feature to repost content, so all we have are third-party applications)	Likes	(Again, you can't directly open up links from any Instagram post yet)	Followers
LinkedIn	Comments	Shares	Likes	Clicks	Followers

Once you know what metrics you are looking for and how they connect to your business objectives and conversion goals, it is just a matter of reading directly from any of the several reports that you have free access to.

Reading Facebook insights

There are two ways to look at Facebook's data: in your browser or by downloading a spreadsheet. If you decide to look at it directly on your

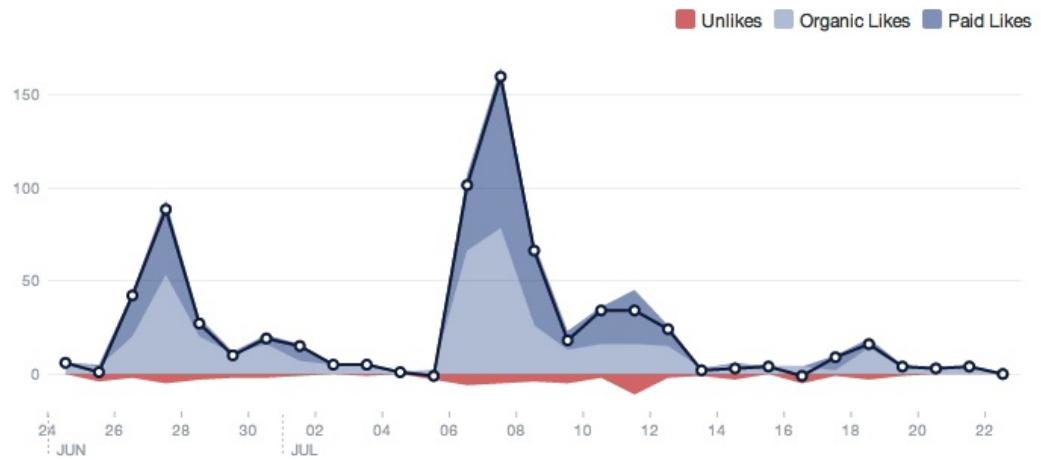
browser, go to <https://www.facebook.com/insights/> and select a specific fan page. This is what your dashboard's overview tab will look like:



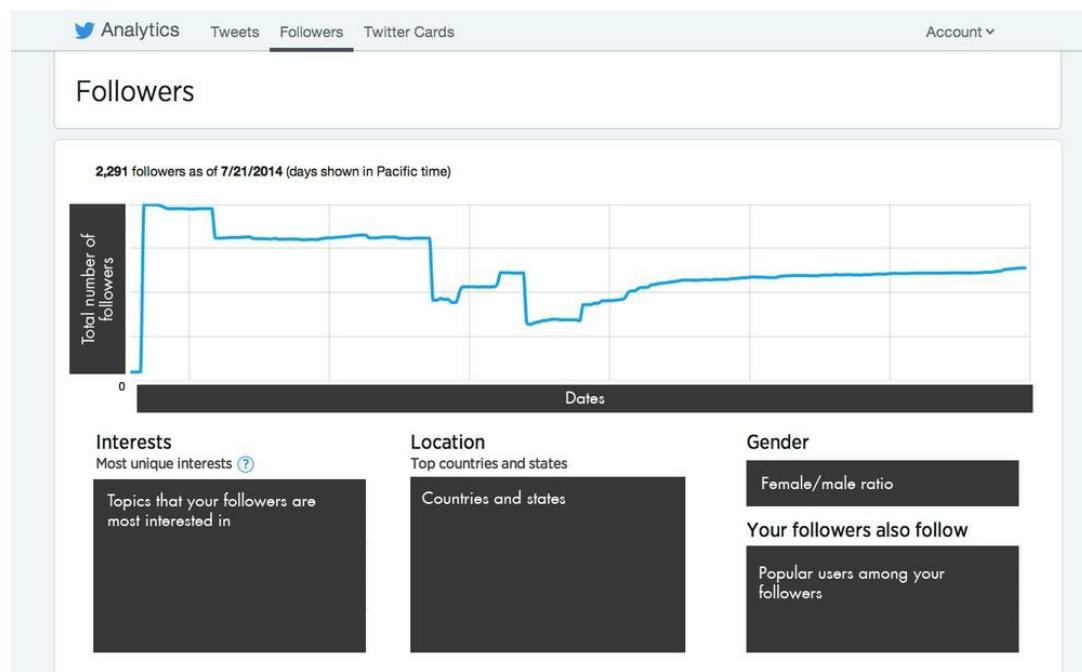
These browser-based insights will give you enough data for basic reporting and ongoing decision making. However, you still may want to download the spreadsheets to compare specific data points over a long period of time and generate custom reports. Facebook Insights data is not available before July 19, 2011. By clicking on each of the additional tabs shown (Likes, Reach, Visits, Posts, People), you can zero in on the details for each metric. Here are some of the questions that they can help you answer:

Likes tab

- Total Page Likes chart
 - How has our brand's total follower base grown over time?
 - What made people like or unlike our brand page? (Click on any specific date in the graph to figure it out.)
- Net Likes chart
 - Overall, is our brand gaining or losing more followers each day? (Follow the dark blue line to see the balance of Net Likes. This marks the trend.)



- Is there a specific day where the balance looks particularly negative? What happened on that day?



- Where Your Likes Came From chart
 - What channels are bringing your brand more followers?

Reach tab

- How many people saw your brand's posts? How much of that exposure was “organic” (a product of natural interactions) and how

much was paid for (a product of an advertising push)?

- How many likes, comments, and shares did your content get every day?
- How many people have hidden your posts from their timeline, reported you as spam, or unliked your page?

Visits tab

- What sections of your page are viewed the most?
- How many people have interacted with your brand in ways other than comments, likes, or shares?
- How many have mentioned your brand, posted something on your page, checked in at your location, or claimed one of your offers?
- What external sites are bringing you more viewers?

Posts tab

- When are your brand's fans online? (When is the best time to publish content?)
- Which post types are most effective to generate engagement and reach?
- How have each of your posts performed in terms of reach and engagement? (You can sort them by clicking on each column's header. That will let you see your Top 10 Engaging Posts, for instance.)

People tab

- What do your brand followers look like in terms of gender, age, location, and language?

- Who engage with your content the most, men or women? A younger or older audience?

Once you've taken a look at these *actionable metrics*, consider any or all of the following activities to improve your brand page's internal conversion rate (i.e., how many new brand followers you can capture).

Metric	Action
Negative net likes	Avoid the events that took place in the particular day when your brand had a high negative net like result (i.e., unlikes were much higher than new likes)
Post type generating the highest engagement	Publish more of your brand content in the format that results in the most likes, clicks, comments, and shares
Single post that generated the highest engagement in the last month	Analyze the post's content and success factors, as well as your brand followers' comments on it, and find a way to replicate it.
Country where most of your fans are from	Produce content that reflects the context of that particular country
Age group to which most of your fans belong	Produce content that appeals to this particular age group

Reading Twitter analytics

Like Facebook, Twitter offers both in-browser analytics and downloadable spreadsheets. You will find this data by visiting <https://analytics.twitter.com>.

The Tweets tab shows how each of your individual posts on Twitter has performed in terms of engagement. This engagement, as shown earlier, is expressed as Faves, Retweets, and Replies, which are the equivalent of Likes, Shares, and Comments on Facebook (look back at the Equivalencies table).

A second tab displays information about your followers: how much they've grown, what they're interested in, where they're located, whether they are male or female, and others they're following.

Social Network	Sessions	Pageviews	Avg. Session Duration	Pages / Session
1. Facebook	75 (28.52%)	95 (21.02%)	00:01:19	1.27
2. Twitter	73 (27.76%)	142 (31.42%)	00:01:46	1.95
3. Google+	71 (27.00%)	117 (25.88%)	00:01:40	1.65
4. LinkedIn	16 (6.08%)	36 (7.96%)	00:03:34	2.25
5. Pinterest	13 (4.94%)	34 (7.52%)	00:03:41	2.62

Once you've taken a look at these actionable metrics, consider any or all of the following activities to improve your brand page's internal conversion rate (i.e., how many new brand followers you can capture).

Metric	Action
Best tweets in terms of retweets	Analyze the tweet's content and success factors, as well as your brand followers' replies, and find a way to replicate it
Topics generating the most interest among your followers	Publish more of your brand content around these topics
Gender to which most of your fans belong	Produce content that appeals to this particular gender group

Reading visual analytics (Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr)

The growing importance of image-based social networks like Pinterest and Instagram has created a need for analytics tools that help us decipher what is going on beneath the surface.

Watch out for the emergence of more tools like Curalate (available for Pinterest, Instagram, and Tumblr), Totems (Instagram), Piquora (Pinterest, Instagram, and Tumblr), and Iconosquare (Instagram).

External: Measuring the Effectiveness of Social Media Referrals and Lead Count

Navigate to your Google Analytics profile and click on Social under the Acquisition section on the left menu.

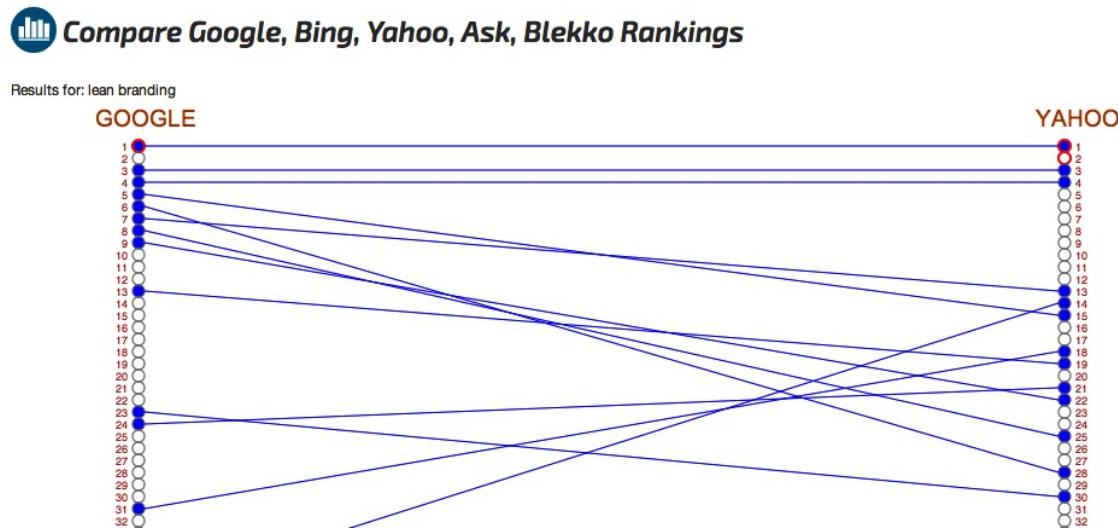
This section will help you understand what Google defines as your *social*

impact: the total value added by your brand's social media presence, as evidenced through referrals, conversions, which landing pages they interact with, and how they share using social buttons throughout the site. Consider the following sample report about social referral:

Shared URL	Sessions	Pageviews	Avg. Session Duration	Data Hub Activities	Pages / Session
1. leanbranding.com/blog/free-webinars-week-30-diy-tactics-create-sell-your-startup%E2%80%99s-brand	86 (33.08%)	114 (25.22%)	00:01:00	3 (7.50%)	1.33
2. www.leanbranding.com/	34 (13.08%)	67 (14.82%)	00:01:46	6 (15.00%)	1.97
3. leanbranding.com/blog/8-amazing-tools-build-your-brand%E2%80%99s-landing-page	19 (7.31%)	32 (7.08%)	00:02:48	1 (2.50%)	1.68

It isn't hard to detect that Facebook is a particularly important channel for this brand in terms of visits, while LinkedIn visitors spend the most time looking at the content. Knowing this can help you establish priorities for your brand communications strategy.

Now let's look at landing pages, the individual links mentioned in these social posts:



For this particular day, Google Analytics is showing us that most social media (referred) visitors landed on our home page and a webinar announcement, followed by an article about landing page tools for startups. You can ask Google to compute this data for any given time period, whether it's days, weeks, or months.

Social Media Marketing: What to Test

Content topics

Which topics trigger the most engagement from our brand's audience?

Content format

What type of post works best to trigger engagement with our audience?
(Image, video, text?)

Channel

Is this the right network to reach my brand's target audience? Is there a new network that my brand's target audience has joined?

Distribution time

What day and time of the week works best for my audience?

Distribution intensity

How many posts per day are most efficient to stimulate interaction?

Search Engine Optimization: How to Measure

Thinking about search engine optimization isn't exactly thrilling. Compared to other brand strategy components where you get to be creative and inspired, wrapping your head around how a highly complex algorithm will "read" you sounds boring—to say the least.

Here's where it gets exciting: have you ever thought how consumers *first* learn about your brand and decide to move forward with it? Google and Shopper Sciences studied 5,000 shoppers in 2010 to answer this question.^[63] They bumped into a phenomenon called the "Zero Moment of Truth," or ZMOT: the very first instant of brand exposure, which takes place before the consumer even *sees* the product on a (literal or virtual) shelf. At ZMOT, your

brand has a unique opportunity to capture attention and trigger purchase.

Search engines have become a powerful source of information for consumers with an active need or desire. Just think about your own behavior the last time you had a problem. In the Internet era, solutions are just a couple of clicks away, and typing “How to...” in any search engine is a highly popular first step in consumer problem solving.

Unfortunately, search engine algorithm systems keep changing like nobody’s business. While you will always be able to find someone with the specific technical knowledge to “hack” whatever algorithm is working at the time, it is a much better use of your time to focus on some SEO basics that don’t change as frequently. We mentioned some of these back in [Chapter 3](#):

- Refer to your key topics as much as you can, and make sure that you are following basic HTML SEO practices like including these terms (keywords) in your metadescriptions, body copy, and headings.
- Link to other sites, and get other sites to link to yours.
- Submit your sitemap to search engines.
- Create great content that generates quality traffic.
- Create profiles in social networks that resonate well with your audience.

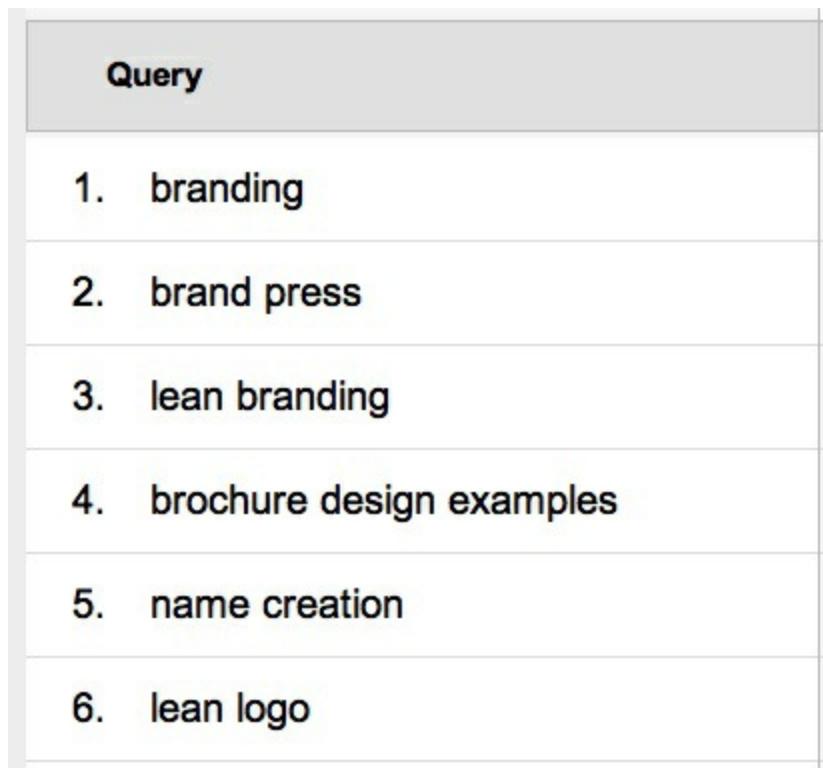
Let’s review some of the most effective ways to test how search engines “read” your brand.

Measuring How Well SEO Is Working on Your Landing Page

Use the On-Page Optimization Tool by Internet Marketing Ninjas^[64] or any other similar SEO report tool to discover potential issues with your keywords and links. After you insert your site’s URL, these tools will generate a report with potential issues and suggestions on how to solve them.

Measuring How Your Landing Page Ranks Versus Your Competitors'

Since Google, Bing, and Yahoo! are the most popular search engines in the United States (as of January 2014), you can open three tabs on your favorite browser and search for your most important keywords to see how your brand stands. However, if you aren't ranking within the first pages, it can be tedious to find your brand's position "by hand." SEOChat created a tool that lets you compare two search engine rankings side by side, up to the 50th position.^[65] You insert the keywords you're interested in and your URL, and the tool does the rest. In the following example, you can see how *lean branding.com* stacks up against similar sites in Google and Yahoo! when you search for the term *lean branding*. The circles mark our brand's URL, while the lines show the difference in ranking from one search engine to the next.



Measuring Which Keywords Consumers Are Using to Find Your Brand

Open Google Analytics and click on the Search Engine Optimization section

under Acquisition. There is a subsection called Queries that contains the specific words used by consumers when Google's search engine returned your site. Here's an example from *leanbranding.com*:



By looking at the number of impressions (how many times your site's pages appeared), clicks, clickthrough (how many of those impressions resulted in clicks to your site), and average position, you will be able to measure the following brand communications strategies. To sort any column (from top to bottom or vice versa), just click on the header:

Query list

Are the keywords we expect appearing in our query list? Are consumers finding our brand by using the terms we are optimizing for?

Clickthrough rate

Which terms are most efficient for a high clickthrough rate? This may help answer the question: what are consumers looking for that our brand's online content is uniquely capable of delivering?

Impressions

What topics generate the most impressions—opening opportunities for more brand content generation around them?

Search Engine Optimization: What to Test

Feel free to experiment with any of the following variables:

- Main keywords used in your brand's website
- On-page metatags
- Type of brand content generated around key topics

Paid Advertising: How to Measure

Imagine a billboard. A giant, expensive billboard right in the middle of some upscale neighborhood. Now picture your brand up there. Start adding costs: poster printing, design, and advertising expenses. Depending on which stage your business is in, this may or may not sound like a sizeable expense.

Regardless, I dare you to calculate a return on this investment. What would you look at first? How would you determine how many potential customers saw your brand? How will you know the difference between plain bystanders and engaged viewers? This has been the main pitfall of traditional advertising: how difficult it is to measure its direct returns. No wonder merchant John Wanamaker felt this way in the 1900s:

Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half.



That's why throughout this book I've introduced a series of online brand communication strategies that can be thoroughly measured, tested, and pivoted based on evidence. Online advertising is no exception.

Now, instead of a billboard, think of an online ad for your brand. What if I told you that this ad is somehow connected with a piece of code that can be literally “followed” throughout the World Wide Web? This is exactly what a conversion *pixel* or *code* does.

The screenshot shows the Google AdWords interface with the 'Tools' tab selected. On the left sidebar, there are sections for 'All conversions' (Contacted us, Newsletter Subscriber) and 'Search Funnels' (See how users convert). The main area is titled 'New Conversion' with three steps: 'New Conversion' (highlighted in yellow), 'Settings', and 'Next steps'. Under 'New Conversion', there are fields for 'Conversion name' (empty input field) and 'Source' (radio buttons for Webpage, Call on-site, Mobile or tablet app, Calls from ads using call extensions, Import; 'Webpage' is selected). At the bottom are 'Save and continue' and 'Cancel new conversion' buttons.

It isn't enough anymore to know whether a user saw your ad or clicked on it. Conversion code snippets can be used in conjunction with your online ads to

figure out what happened *after* a user clicked. Did she buy your digital product? Subscribe to your newsletter? *Did she convert?*

Let's review how conversion codes or pixels work for both Google AdWords and Facebook Ads.

Conversion Tracking in Google AdWords

1. Sign in with the Google AdWords account that you created back in [Chapter 5](#) (at adwords.google.com).
2. Go to Tools and click on the Conversion button.
3. Remember how we defined conversion as a desired course of action that users are expected to complete? Now is the time to tell Google AdWords how this conversion will happen, whether it's somewhere on your web page, calls coming straight from the site, or downloads at app marketplaces, among other advanced options.



4. Now define some of the settings for this conversion tracking. What type of conversion are you following? A signup, lead, simply looking at a page, or completing a purchase? Also define the amount of time that Google should be following this conversion after the first click has been made. Not all users decide to go forth with your offer immediately, so this time frame is actually *crucial* to track conversion correctly.

5. Insert the conversion code snippet on your site (or have someone who knows do it).
6. Look at your Campaign Reports to track how many conversions each ad has triggered. Google not only tracks conversions coming from clicks (conversion rate) but also those coming from views (view-through conversion).
7. Having set this up, you can decide to pay Google AdWords only when a viewer converts according to the goal that you just created.

Conversion Tracking in Facebook Ads

1. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/ads/create/> and select any of the conversion goals listed in the main menu.
2. Name your conversion pixel, which is simply the code snippet that you will insert on your website so Facebook can track user behavior.
3. Now insert the code in the page where the conversion act takes place. Remember the Thank You page we had created for the landing page experiment we set up earlier in the chapter? We will use it again to check whether our user has completed the desired conversion act (subscribing to our newsletter).
4. To make your return on advertising investment even more visible, make sure that the “Bidding and Pricing” section on your newly created ad is marked as “Bid for Website Conversions.” Facebook will only charge you for users who clicked and converted thanks to the ad. Now *that’s* smart advertising!

Paid Advertising: What to Test

Headline

Which online ad headline is most efficient to trigger interest and conversion?

Imagery

Which images supporting our online ads work best to trigger conversion?

Body copy/text

Which message in our online ads works best to trigger conversion?

Call to action

Which call to action in our online ads works best to trigger conversion?

Conversion page

Which version of our landing page works best to trigger conversion, once users have clicked through our online ads?

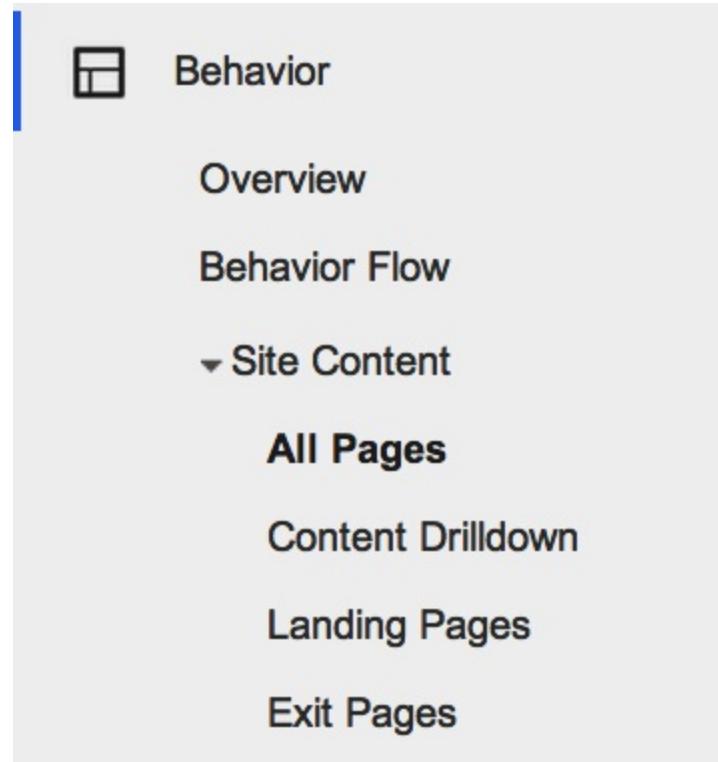
Blogging: How to Measure

As you know, successful brands are in the business of taking customers from A to B, where B is whom those customers want to be. One way to let potential buyers know that your product or service can take them there is to reveal your brand as an expert in the area of their need or want. We want to be able to send a message along the lines of “you can trust our expertise at solving X pain.”

While there are many content marketing strategies, [thought leadership](#) can create brand trust like no other. Brands that position themselves as thought leaders form deep associations in their consumers’ minds.

Consider a particular pain that you are trying to solve at the moment. If I were to continuously publish content related to how your problem can be solved—content that reveals my expertise—wouldn’t you start associating me with the solution? This *problem-solution* link is precisely what makes

content marketing an exceptional brand communication strategy.



There are a few measurements that reveal how well we are positioning our brand as a shortcut to consumers' self-realization through blog posts:

- How many users read this content
- Whether they spend a considerable amount of time reviewing it
- Whether they share it with others
- Whether they are jumping from a given blog post to a desired conversion goal (subscribing, signing up, purchasing, etc.)

Measuring How Many Users Read Your Content and How Much Time They're Spending on It

Make sure that your brand blog is connected to a robust analytics platform. Google Analytics, which we've been using throughout this book, delivers a strong set of features for free. A simple glance at the Site Content section under Behavior offers a clear idea of the total number of times that each piece

of content has been viewed and how much time users have dedicated to it.

	Landing Page ?	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions	Goal 1: Subscriber Conversion ▾
		Sessions ?	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages / Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?		
		49 % of Total: 1.10% (4,470)	73.47% Site Avg: 76.06% (-3.41%)	36 % of Total: 1.06% (3,400)	53.06% Site Avg: 63.20% (-16.04%)	3.22 Site Avg: 2.00 (81.12%)	00:05:06 Site Avg: 00:02:10 (135.94%)	6.12% Site Avg: 2.57% (137.98%)	3 % of Total: 2.61% (115)
1.	/blog/what-is-lean-branding	49(100.00%)	73.47%	36(100.00%)	53.06%	3.22	00:05:06	6.12%	3(100.00%)

Measuring Whether Users Share Your Content with Others

Ever seen a small “share bar” while you were reading an online article? Your brand’s blog needs one, too, and here’s why: these share bars collect crucial data about the way your posts are being shared. Though you can also add individual share buttons from most social networks, it is much more efficient to resort to any of the available third-party services that pull all the data together. Some of the most popular are AddThis (addthis.com), ShareThis (sharethis.com), and AddToAny (addtoany.com).

Whenever you look at any of these bars’ analytics reports, consider the following:

Look at the content that has been shared the most.

Analyze the post’s content and success factors, as well as your reader’s comments on it, and find a way to replicate it. You can also think about republishing this content (recycling) if enough time has passed since it was first posted.

Look at the social networks that your audience is using to share your content.

Think about how you can reward or thank these readers for sharing to stimulate—you guessed it—*more sharing*. If most of your readers are using Twitter to share your brand’s content, maybe it’s time to reply back and thank them for doing so. Alternatively, think of contests where you can reward this behavior.

Look at your top follow services.

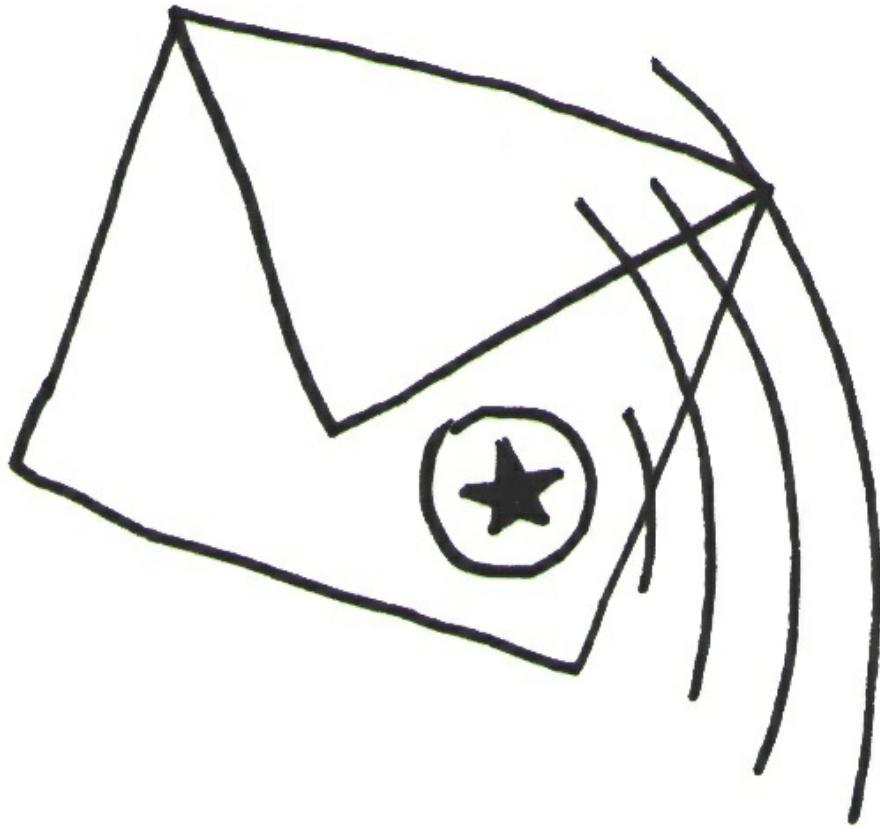
If most of your readers are using a given service to follow you, perhaps it's time to take a look at this platform's API (if it has one) and see how you can further integrate with it. For example: if Facebook is your top follow service, use its API to include an *activity feed* that shows readers how others are interacting with your content on that network. Most social networks have *social plugins* worth taking a look at to stimulate further brand content sharing.

Measuring Whether Your Brand Content Is Resulting in Conversions

Google Analytics provides an easy way to measure whether any specific post is driving conversion. Remember the conversion goal we set up earlier in this chapter? We asked Google to track down new subscribers to our newsletter. Now all we have to do to see how any individual post connects with that objective is to click on Behavior → Site Content → Landing Pages.

Once you're there, take any specific blog post and see how efficient it is at generating conversion. You can also click on any column header and rank posts from most to least effective at converting. If you have set up more than one conversion goal, select which one you want to look at in the drop-down after Conversions. Once you get a hold of it, visualizing this kind of data is truly eye opening!

In this case, we are looking at a specific post's results two days after it was first published. You can see the number of visits (49) and how low its conversion rate is (6.12%). By comparing this post to more successful ones, we can effectively optimize our brand content to improve overall conversion rates.



Blogging: What to Test

As you must have realized at this point, communicating brands has to do with testing and learning incessantly—at least at the tactical level. Here are some of the variables you can play with until you've found an optimal formula:

Title

Which blog post title structures and words are most efficient to trigger conversion?

Content topics

Which post topics seem to work best to trigger conversion?

Content type

Which blog post formats (lists, long paragraphs, videos, images, etc.) work best to trigger conversion?

Call to action

Which call to action embedded in our blog posts works best to trigger conversion?

Imagery

Which images supporting our blog posts work best to trigger conversion?

Email Marketing: How to Measure

Wouldn't it be nice if you could send a letter and be notified as soon as your significant other opens the envelope? Something along the lines of "Hey, your friend actually cares." Or "X has opened your two-sentence letter almost 10 times. Jeez, he must have liked it." Maybe even "What were you thinking about? This person is way too busy for you." *Closure.*

Great news: email marketing, as most other brand communication strategies introduced in this book, is completely and shamelessly *trackable*.

Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behavior			Subscribers	Goal 1: Subscriber Conversion	Revenue
	Visits	% New Visits	New Visits	Bounce Rate	Pages / Visit	Avg. Visit Duration			
	480 % of Total: 100.00% (480)	70.21% Site Avg: 70.21% (0.00%)	337 % of Total: 100.00% (337)	54.37% Site Avg: 54.37% (0.00%)	2.37 Site Avg: 2.37 (0.00%)	00:02:26 Site Avg: 00:02:26 (0.00%)	0.42% Site Avg: 0.42% (0.00%)	2 % of Total: 100.00% (2)	\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (\$0.00)
1. Organic Search	201	86.57%	174	71.64%	1.59	00:01:22	0.00%	0	\$0.00
2. Referral	87	71.26%	62	26.44%	2.92	00:04:15	0.00%	0	\$0.00
3. Direct	82	76.83%	63	45.12%	2.77	00:03:49	1.22%	1	\$0.00
4. Email	74	25.68%	19	47.30%	3.76	00:02:21	1.35%	1	\$0.00
5. Social	36	52.78%	19	61.11%	1.58	00:01:05	0.00%	0	\$0.00

No matter what email service you use, it will be able to provide you with

some basic insights about your recipients' behavior:

- How many of them opened your email (*open rate*)
- How many of them clicked on a link inside your email (*click rate*)
- Which links were clicked on the most
- Which time of the day and day of the week worked best
- How many times each subscriber opened your email, her location as she opened it, and how many emails bounced, among others

Some actions that may stem from these measurements include:

Look at your open rate for several emails.

Which factors contributed to one being opened more than the other?

Look at your click rate for several emails.

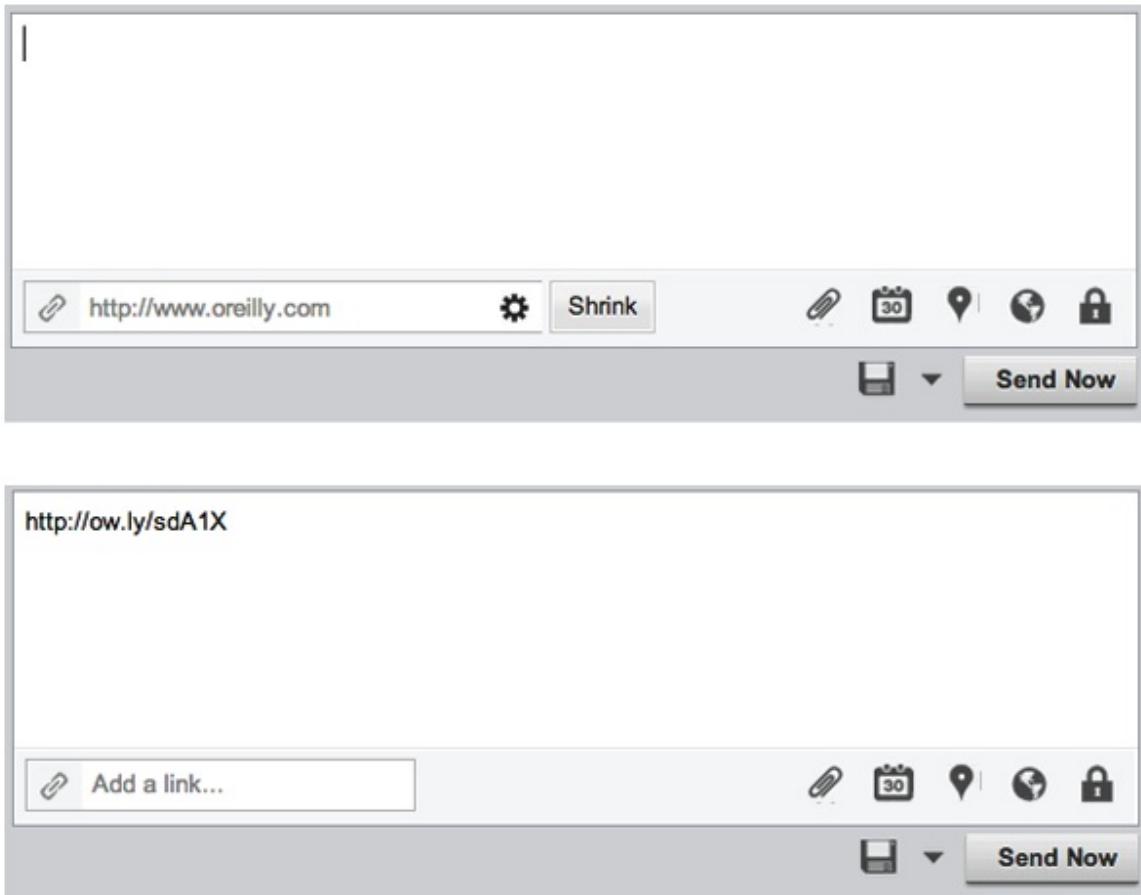
Which factors influenced the amount of clicks each one received?

Look at the content that received the most clicks in individual emails.

What made this link especially appealing? Did layout or typography have anything to do with its success?

Measuring Email Marketing's Influence in Conversion

Google Analytics comes to the rescue again. Navigate to Acquisition Channels and look at Email. This example shows a blog's channel performance in a four-day period.



During this time period, 1 out of the 19 visitors that came through email completed the established conversion goal. If you click on Email, Google Analytics will show you where your email subscribers first landed on your site (i.e., landing pages), as well as individual conversion rates for each page. [\[66\]](#)

Email Marketing: What to Test

Subject line

Which subject line structure and wording is most efficient to increase open rates?

Headline

Which headline is most efficient to increase the click rate?

Call to action

Which call to action embedded in our emails works best to trigger clicks and conversion?

Landing page types

Which types of destination URLs are most efficient at getting our email subscribers to convert?

Marketing Video: How to Measure

Video is an engaging channel to communicate your brand story, but how effective it is at converting depends entirely on you. As we've discussed before, the call to action lies at the heart of conversion and is the key to leading consumers down a desired action path (remember the get-keep-grow funnel?).

By default, videos generate a sensory connection between brands and consumers; however, not everyone makes the leap from viewer to follower to customer. It is *our job* to make that leap easier. After someone sees our brand videos, joining in on the action (conversion) should be a no-brainer.

While knowing how many people have seen our brand videos might be uplifting (vanity metric alert!), it does not necessarily help us understand the relationship between the video and our ultimate conversion goal. *Here's one exception:* one or more of your revenue streams depend directly on video views. In this case, views will constitute an actionable metric.

The two most popular video services available, YouTube and Vimeo, provide deep insights into viewer behavior. Some of the metrics provided out of the box include:

Performance

How many views each of your videos has collected, how many seconds have been spent watching your videos, and how many people have subscribed to your channel.

Engagement

How many people have “liked” your videos, how many have “disliked” them, and how many have commented, shared them, and/or added them as favorites.

Demographics

Where your viewers are located and their gender.

Unlike other services, YouTube offers free analytics out of the box and a neat feature that will be important to us as we try to make conversion easier: *video annotations*. If you are interested in more advanced analytics and tighter control over the way your brand videos are displayed, try a solution like Brightcove or Wistia.

At the most basic level, you can use YouTube Analytics to try out the following measurements and understand how your brand videos lead to conversion:

- Measure how many users click on (individual) calls to action strategically placed around your video.
- Measure how many users convert when they’ve been referred to your site via video (hosted in your desired platform).

Measure How Many Users Click on Specific Calls to Action

Remember when we discussed link shortening back in [Chapter 5](#)? We initially discussed how useful it is to track user behavior when we post some sort of brand content in social media. It will come in handy again as we insert strategic links around our videos to stimulate our viewers into taking action.

Just use whichever social media management platform you’ve selected (most offer a link shortening and tracking feature) and insert the destination URL where you want to take your video viewers. These are the general steps:

1. Shorten the destination URL using any of the available services. This is an example with Hootsuite:

Like About Share Add to

DESCRIPTION:
Want to learn more? Subscribe for free tips: http://ow.ly/sdA1X|

PRIVACY:
PUBLIC

Save Cancel

2. Go to your preferred video service and change the video description field to include this link next to a clear call to action.

Enter an Ow.ly/Ht.ly URL, or your own vanity URL
http://ow.ly/sdA1X
Apply

Or you can search an ow.ly URL from your Twitter account
Please select a Twitter account

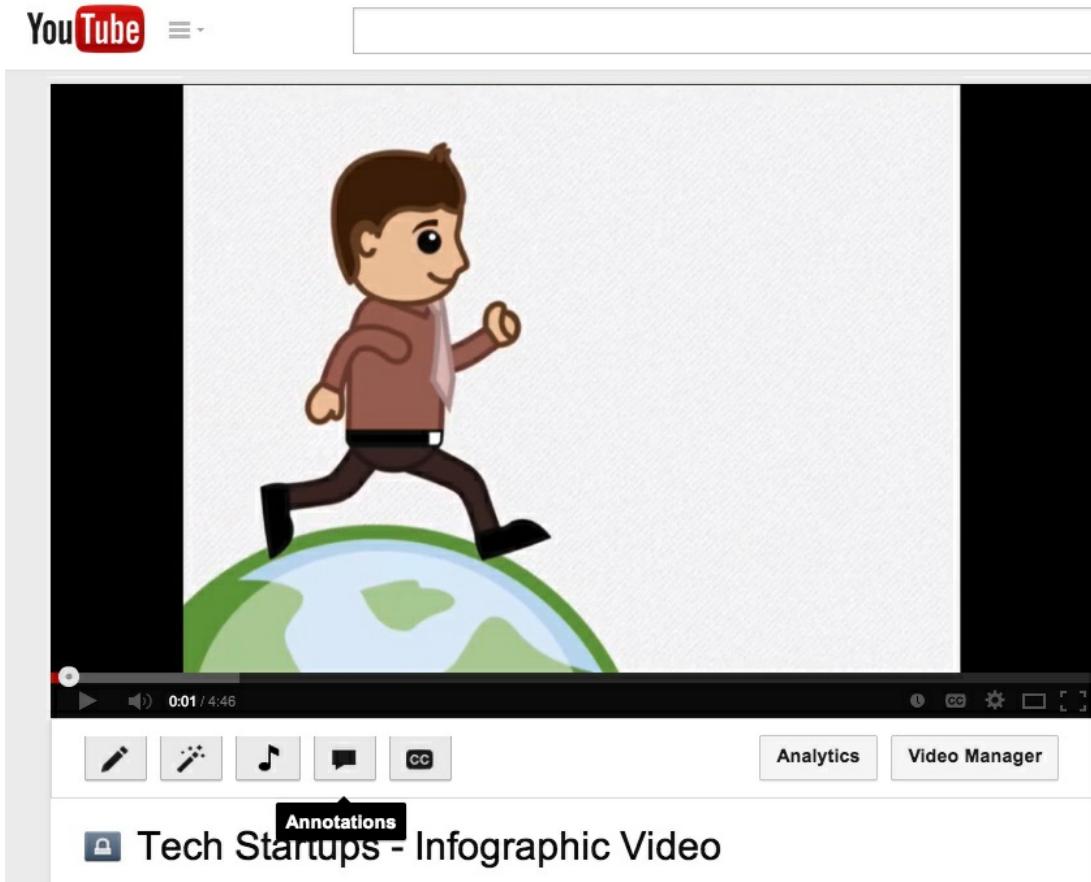
Click Stats

<http://ow.ly/sdA1X>
http://www.leanbranding.com
Created: Jan 02, 2014 7:15 PM
Total Clicks: 40

Jun 22 Jun 27 Jul 02 Jul 07 Jul 12 Jul 17 Jul 22

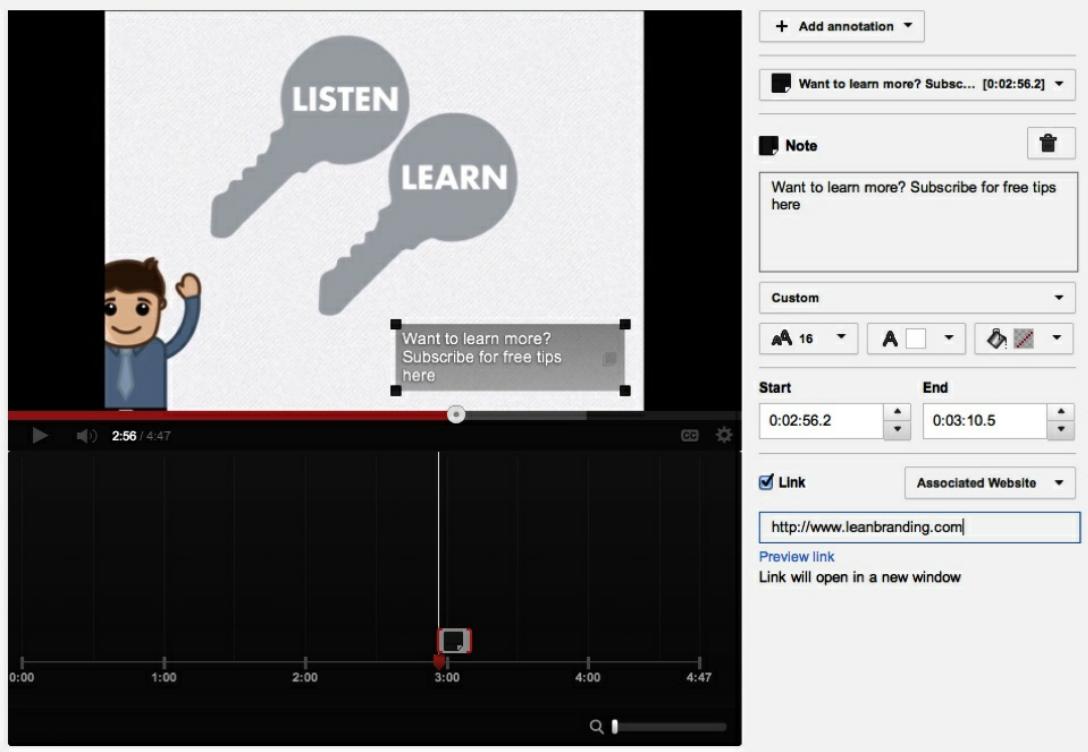
✓ <http://ow.ly/y5Xl8>

3. Go back to your link shortening/tracking service and measure the impact of your call to action.



Annotating Your Brand Video to Trigger Conversion

1. Go to YouTube and upload the video where you want to insert this call to action.
2. Make sure that your YouTube channel is verified and that you've inserted an Associated Website on your account.
3. Click on Annotations below any of your videos to add the call to action.



4. Add a note and text, and check the Link box. Select an Associated Website and type the website you previously associated to your channel (step 2). You can link to any external site that has been verified in your Google Webmaster Tools account (meaning: you have control over the site and have proven it to Google).^[67]

5. Click on Publish and watch your referral numbers grow (read on to find out how).

Measure How Many Users Convert When They've Been Referred to Your Site via Video

Google Analytics yet again. Go to Acquisition → Channels and navigate to

Primary Dimension. Click on Source and then Advanced. The idea here is to tell Google to look out for all traffic coming from the platform where you've hosted your video (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.). In this case, we've created a report that will show all traffic coming from a source containing *youtube.com*.

PRESS RELEASE IMPACT LOG

ABOUT THE CHANNEL 			CONTACT HISTORY 		CONVERSION RESULTS 		
CONTACT NAME	CHANNEL NAME	APPROX. REACH	CONTACT DATE	TYPE OF CONTACT	RESULTING ARTICLE	REPORTER CONVERSION	READER CONVERSION
Reporter's name	Name of the media outlet that you are sending your release to	Approximate readership of this media outlet	Date(s) in which you contacted this person	How you contacted this person: email, paper-based, face-to-face, social media	Name, date & link (if available) of the resulting publication	Total articles that resulted from this effort	Total leads that resulted from this effort

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As with Email before, you will be able to track conversion rate and conversion goal completion for this particular channel. Feeling powerful yet?

Marketing Video: What to Test

Title

Which video title structure and wording is most efficient to increase views?

Length

Which length seems to work best for our audience in terms of time spent watching our brand's videos?

Call to action

Which call to action embedded in our video descriptions (or story lines) works best to trigger referrals and conversion?

Content topics

Which topics are most efficient at increasing video views, likes, and shares?

Press Release: How to Measure

Like your brand videos, press releases must be “seeded” with calls to action to result in any conversion goal. Back in [Chapter 5](#) you saw how a simple template can help you organize the first version of your press release, but our main concern now is to measure its impact. And there are two sides to that impact: our conversion goal for reporters and our conversion goal for their readers.

While your conversion goal for readers may vary, we know one thing about reporter conversion: *success means we get covered*. Straightforward: our brand, published.

There are a number of ways to go about this. If you are sending an offline press release, following up on conversion will be harder because (as you've seen by now) there are no tracking codes in the air we breathe (yet?!). If you are sending an online press release, you can embed traceable links (which you already learned how to create) and media-specific codes, and even host your content on a landing page that you can completely track down using Google Analytics. Here's how that would work:

Traceable links

- *To measure reporter conversion*, ask reporters to click on a link that you've previously shortened to find more information, subscribe, or complete any other conversion act.
- *To measure reader conversion*, along the same lines, offer some sort of incentive for their readers where they must click on a shortened link (something that makes sense, like bit.ly/LeanBranding) to access it.

Codes

- *To measure reporter conversion*, create a code that reporters can use to get insider access, free trials, or any other incentive.
- *To measure reader conversion*, try media-specific codes. Follow your impact on a given media platform's readership by offering them a special discount or incentive code that matches the referral source. If your article is coming out on Mashable, for instance, try offering a special discount code like MASHABLE10.

Press release landing page

Chapter 5 introduced the idea of online pressrooms. The advantage here is that you can insert analytics codes and find out specifically what is going on behind the scenes of your press content. You can try the same experiments and measurements of any other landing page and optimize reporter conversion.

For both the online and offline approach, the following table will make conversion measurement easier.

BRAND REVIEW SYSTEMS LOG

ABOUT THE CHANNEL 			NEGATIVE REVIEWS 		POSITIVE REVIEWS 		PENDING 
WEEK OF	CHANNEL NAME	APPROX. REACH	NEGATIVE FEEDBACK	SOLUTION	POSITIVE FEEDBACK	RWARD	TO ADDRESS NEXT PERIOD
Week that you are analyzing	Name of the brand review channel that you are looking at	Approximate audience of this channel	How many negative reviews were detected in this period	How many of these reviews were addressed & how	How many positive reviews were detected in this period	How many of these reviews were rewarded & how	How many and which relevant cases are yet to be addressed

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Press Release: What to Test

Title

Which press release structure and wording is most efficient to increase attention, interest, and subsequent publication?

Introduction—a cover email, letter, or call

Which type of introduction works best to increase attention, interest, and subsequent publication?

Body copy

Which brand topics used in our press releases are most efficient at increasing attention, interest, and subsequent publication?

Call to action

Which call to action embedded in our press releases works best to trigger referrals and conversion?

Imagery

Which images supporting our press releases work best to trigger conversion?

Point-of-Purchase Optimization: How to Measure

Depending on your type of product, the point of purchase could be pretty much anything. Because online points of purchase allow for more control and measurement, we will address those specifically. Some possible points of online purchase include:

- A landing page where a transaction happens
- An app marketplace (Google Play, App Store, etc.)
- An ecommerce site or marketplace where you have a storefront (your custom solution, eBay, Amazon)

The following measurements are possible for any of these points of purchase:

Sales copy

Whether the textual information provided about the brand is sufficient to stimulate purchase intention

Imagery

Whether the imagery provided about the product or service is engaging and clear enough to aid the purchase decision

Brand trust

Whether any additional links or evidence are provided to create trust in the brand's product or service

Your ability to measure is determined by how much control you have over the point of purchase. Put simpler: if you are free to manipulate design and code, there's more freedom to measure and experiment. Think about an app marketplace: you can't possibly change the size of the Download button. You can't adjust the way elements are placed on the page. You're pretty much limited to filling out a few fields and making the best use of the space you are granted.

On the other hand, custom sites lend themselves to a lot more experimentation. You can launch A/B versions of a product page and measure each one's conversion rate (where conversion would be the actual purchase).

“Making the sale” is a popular conversion goal across the board, and Google Analytics includes Ecommerce Tracking so that you can figure out almost everything there is to know about it, such as:

- Which of your brand's products sell best
- How long it takes your visitors to make a purchase decision
- How much revenue comes from each transaction

Though these metrics are crucial and a must for every digital product store, optimizing our point of purchase from a brand-appropriate standpoint will take a combined approach.

Sales numbers tell one part of the story, but your consumers' behavior when they are staring at the screen tells a decisive second part.

To tap into these behaviors, let's pick up where we left off with user research back in [Chapter 3](#).

There are simple tools that can help us measure whether the information provided about our brand at point of purchase is clear enough to stimulate purchase intention. One such tool is a *five-second test*:

1. Take a screenshot of your main point-of-purchase page as it is. Then, create a mockup with a slight change in sales copy, imagery, or trust elements (reviews, links).
2. Create a preference test using Verify (verifyapp.com), 5 Second Test (5secondtest.com), or any other similar service.
3. Ask users a question along the lines of: which site would you buy this product from? Why? For each of your versions, ask: what do you remember about this site? What did this site ask you to do?^[68]

Point-of-Purchase Optimization: What to Test

Sales copy

Which textual information provided about our brand is most effective to stimulate purchase intention?

Imagery

Which of the supporting images next to our product or service are most engaging and clear enough to aid the purchase decision?

Brand trust

Which links or evidence help build trust around the brand's product or service?

Review Systems: How to Measure

Because reviews impact the way potential and current customers perceive your brand, it is important to measure the strategy that we're using to manage them. A basic maxim here is:

Brand reviews: address the negative and reward the positive.

To begin with, use this table to keep track of the different review channels

that you will measure over time.

As we saw back in [Chapter 5](#), these channels include, but are not limited to:

- Social media sites (e.g., tweets, Facebook Fan Page ratings)
- Specialized review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor)
- Location-based review sites (e.g., Yelp, YellowPages, Foursquare, Google Places)
- App marketplaces

BRAND PARTNERSHIP IMPACT LOG

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP 					CONVERSION RESULTS 		
PARTNER NAME	PARTNERSHIP NAME	COMBINED REACH	START/END DATE	PARTNERSHIP GOAL	RESULTING INITIATIVES	PARTNER CONVERSION	CUSTOMER CONVERSION
Name of the brand[s] that you are partnering with	Name of the partnership that you have formed (campaign)	Approximate total audience of all partners	Initial and final partnership date	What brand conversion goal is related to this partnership	Name, date & link (if available) of any resulting initiatives	Total initiatives that resulted from this effort (social media, articles, contests, etc.)	Total leads that resulted from this effort

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- Review sections on ecommerce sites (e.g., Amazon, eBay)
- Your own customer service platforms (e.g., Zendesk, Uservoice, Zopim)

A couple of notes about the tracking table:

- Ideally, update this table on a weekly basis. If you face a high review volume, consider updating it daily.
- There are tools that offer dashboards with these interactions and allow several team members to collaborate in responding to them. If this is something you need, take a look at Sprout Social (which integrates with Zendesk and Uservoice, among others) or Hootsuite. Regardless, keeping a log with the preceding information close to hand is an invaluable tool for agile decision making.
- A channel's estimated reach is crucial in that it helps you prioritize where it makes sense to put out fires first.

Brand Partnerships: How to Measure

Brand partnerships are similar to press releases in that we need to get creative to be able to measure their impact in conversion. Unless we have a structured plan to trace a given campaign's results, we will see none. Let's see some of the ways in which we can do this:

Traceable links

Create an incentive for your partner's audience, where they must click on a shortened link (something that makes sense, like *bit.ly/LeanBranding*) to access it.

Codes

Create partner-specific incentive codes. Follow your impact on a given partner's audience by offering them a special discount or incentive code that matches the referral source.

Partnership landing page

Create a landing page where both you and your partner brand redirect users. You can try experiments and measurements as you would with any other landing page and optimize conversion using Google Analytics.

Use the following table to measure how effective each brand partnership has been over time. Keep track of the amount of initiatives (individual contests, joint articles, research projects, crowdsourcing campaigns) that each partnership has generated and write that down under Partner Conversion Result. Also trace the total amount of conversions resulting from both your partnership landing page and referrals stemming from your partner's online presence (website, social media profiles). Update this table as often as required.

BRAND PARTNERSHIP IMPACT LOG

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP					CONVERSION RESULTS		
PARTNER NAME	PARTNERSHIP NAME	COMBINED REACH	START/END DATE	PARTNERSHIP GOAL	RESULTING INITIATIVES	PARTNER CONVERSION	CUSTOMER CONVERSION
Name of the brand(s) that you are partnering with	Name of the partnership that you have formed (campaign)	Approximate total audience of all partners	Initial and final partnership date	What brand conversion goal is related to this partnership	Name, date & link (if available) of any resulting initiatives	Total initiatives that resulted from this effort (social media, articles, contests, etc.)	Total leads that resulted from this effort

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Recap

One of the main difficulties in developing lean startups is our inability to get distance from our own mindset and realize what we are assuming. Measurement solves this issue by providing an objective set of data upon which to decide a course of action.

At their most basic level, all tests involve a statement that needs to be validated, an indicator that we will measure to validate it, a level of that indicator that will tell us if it is true or false, the real level of that indicator as measured by us, and the final result of comparing the expected result with the actual result. Split, or A/B, testing is a type of experiment that rolls out a different version of the component that you are trying to test to different groups.

Analytics technologies have built a much-needed bridge between branding investments and their returns. We can now “wrap” emails, websites, and ads with a piece of code that can be literally “followed” throughout the World Wide Web to measure their impact.

This chapter looked at the different ways to test your brand communication channels’ effectiveness for conversion. Brand communication channels like social media, online advertising, blogs, and videos generate traffic for a landing site where the final conversion is made. Therefore, it is crucial to look at (and understand!) the big picture.

[57] <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/traction>

[58] Published on his Twitter account (@naval) on August 29 of 2012.

[59] Ivan Pavlov (1936), Bequest to the Academic Youth of Soviet Russia.

[60] Chris Rodley, ed., *Cronenberg on Cronenberg* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1992).

[61] <https://developers.google.com/analytics/devguides/collection/ios/v3/>

[62] <http://www.alexa.com/topsites>

[63] <http://www.google.com/think/collections/zero-moment-truth.html>

[64] <http://www.internetmarketingninjas.com/seo-tools/free-optimization/>

[65] <http://tools.seochat.com/tools/google-vs-yahoo-search-results/>

[66] You can also set up a monetary value for each of your goal completions. In that case, Google will add up each additional goal completion’s value to give you an idea of how much your conversion success is worth.

[67] You can also add a link to other videos, playlists, channels, Google+ pages, fundraising projects (click for a list of supported sites), and approved merchandise retail sites. There’s also a call to action for your viewers to subscribe to a specific YouTube channel.

[68] These last two questions target the effectiveness of the sales copy that you decided to use for each of the versions. Alternatively, you could use a single image of your point-of-purchase page and ask the same questions.

Chapter 7. Brand Resonance

Once upon a time I used to love baking. I was 17 and completing my business major in D.C. when my first moment of pride struck: a functional—and quite delicious—cupcake recipe. I perfected it to a point where I could whip out a batch of cupcakes with my eyes closed. I knew exactly where to find the best ingredients: french vanilla, organic flour, premium butter, and fresh eggs. I had a perfectly calibrated oven with precise digital Fahrenheit controls.

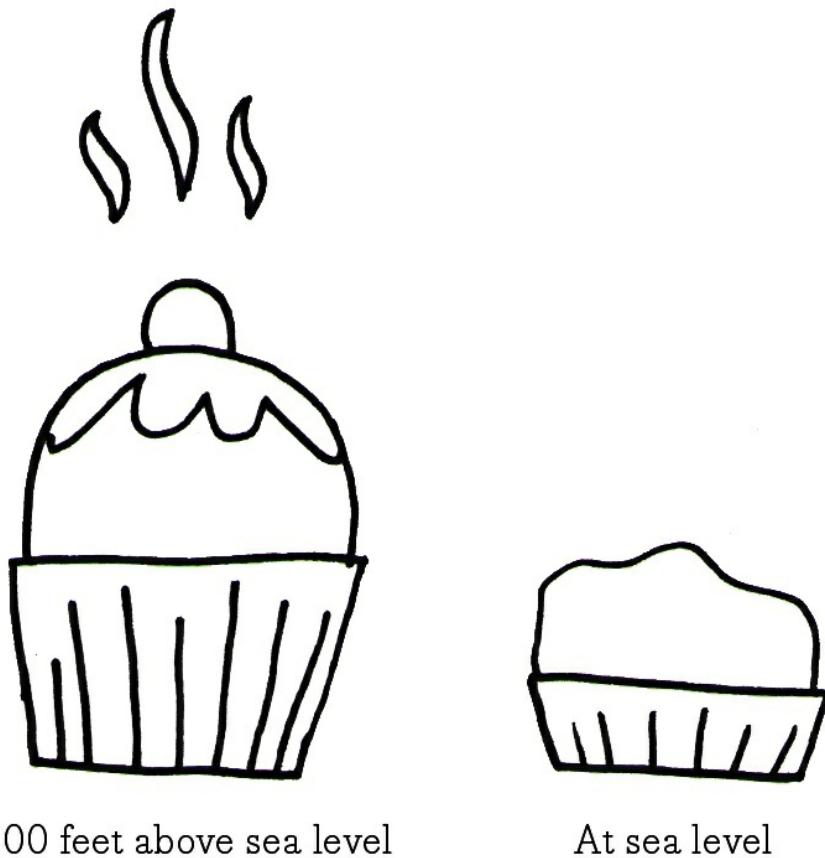
Forget anything you've tasted before. This was heaven.

My cupcakes became legendary. One summer I went back to visit my family in Barranquilla, Colombia. I couldn't wait to bake and show off my incredibly tasty cupcakes. To my horror, my inaugural batch of cupcakes fell flat like a pancake (and I've seen fluffier pancakes).

This made me think. Hard. By the third day of researching I had become some sort of neurotic chemist. As it turns out, baking at sea level is completely different for reasons that are beyond the scope of this book.

Brand stories, like cupcakes, are baked in different contexts. What pops right up at 5,000 feet falls flat at sea level. Brand personality can sound like glory for the cosmopolitan crowd and irritate those in a small town. The brand promise can taste sweet for a given age group and sour for another. Refining your story to suit *your* buyer personas' needs and desires, and hence *resonate* with them, is the smartest way to make sure that we won't fail this taste test.

Make sure you test your brand story's recipe with whomever you're cooking it for.



This chapter will guide you through the process of measuring your brand's resonance with your target audience. We will look closely at some of the elements that may be conflicting with your audience's expectations and learn how to spot when something isn't working with your name, promise, personas, product, positioning, or price.

Defining Resonance

In its most basic definition, *resonance* happens when the vibration of a single object makes the objects next to it vibrate too. The simplest way to think about it is picturing one of those giant meditation gongs.

I probably would have never seen a gong in my life. However, a short visit to China in 2006 marked my first encounter with this fascinating instrument at a

Buddhist temple in Shanghai. Once someone strikes a gong with a mallet, it keeps vibrating with a deep, resonating sound. Everything surrounding it seems to capture and pass on the sound waves. (Apparently, the resonance is so profound that your spirit is supposed to shake, too. Don't try this at home, though...you might get evicted).

When a brand's story resonates well, you get the gong effect. You get customers that pulsate in response to your message. There's movement. A ripple effect. Someone is, *in fact*, listening.



World Peace Gong in Gödöll, Budapest

Resonance: Achieving Brand-Market Fit

In Spanish, we like to use an expression that represents the basic human position during any transaction:

¿Cómo voy yo ahí?

which roughly translates to:

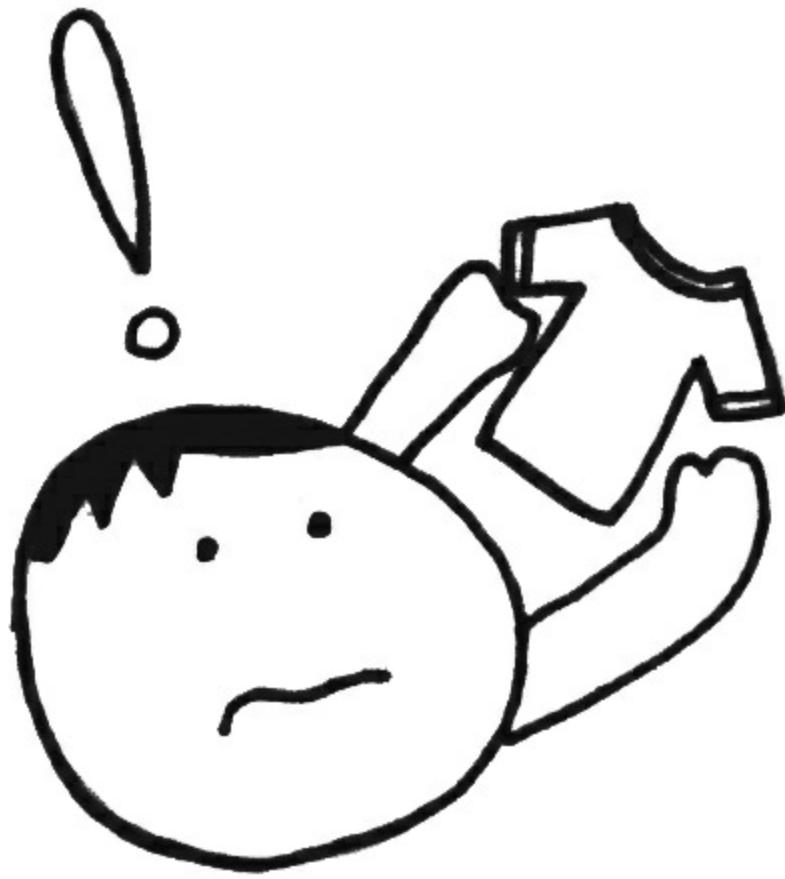
What's in it for me?

Meditate on this phrase. Keep it close. Write it down on at least 10 sticky notes and paste it on every surface you can find. Write it on every single page of your daily planner. Get it tattooed (OK, that might be going too far).

Resonance is about having a compelling and context-specific answer for your buyer's "what's in it for me?" question. This answer is embedded in your brand story, and it is the strongest bond that you can form with a potential customer. It should be along the lines of "I'll take you from A to B, where B is where you want to be." (Remember, from back in [Chapter 1](#)?)

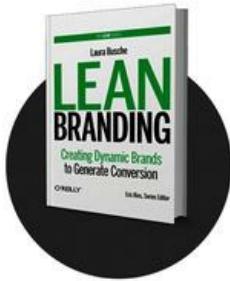
The answer to "what's in it for me?" contains the sense of *fit* that venture capitalist Marc Andreessen described as "being in a good market with a product that can satisfy that market."^[69]

He labeled this idea *product/market fit*. What we are aiming for in this chapter is an authentic *brand/market fit* that aligns our core *promise, positioning, product journey, and personality* with the aspirations of a specific set of buyer personas.



Luckily, there are more than a few ways to test whether your brand story is resonating well with potential buyers. Throughout this chapter, you will learn how to measure if your product journey, personality, positioning, and promise are working for your buyer personas. If there's a clear, captivating answer to "what's in it for me?" And, most importantly, if your brand story won't fall flat like my cupcakes.

MAKE SURE YOU TEST
your brand story's recipe
*with whomever you're
cooking it for.*



Measuring Your Brand's Name

Our brand name needs to resonate well with our audience in order to differentiate and be recognizable in the marketplace. Because human beings attach different meanings to the words they hear and read, these two particular measurements can elucidate just how appropriate our name is:

Brand name association map

Which terms does our target customer associate with our current name or potential name options?

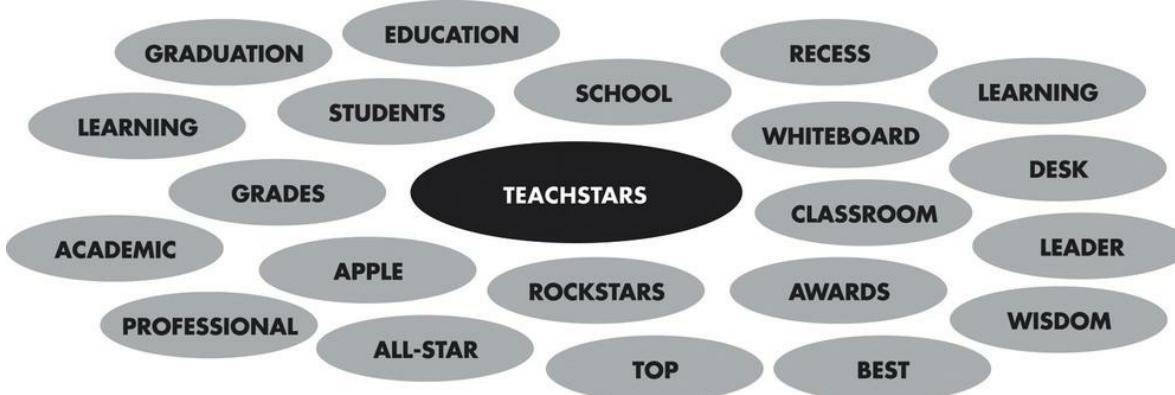
Brand name A/B testing

Which of the name options that we are considering appeal to them the most? Why does that make *sense*?

Brand Name Association Map

This technique will require sitting down with a small number of current and/or potential customers. First, brief them about your brand positioning. The key here is *brief*—you don't want to deliver information that can affect their perception. If you were to say too much, your customers' input would suffer bias. Literally, just read your brand positioning out loud.

Then hand them a sheet of paper with your current or potential brand name in the middle. Ask them to start mapping every single word that they can associate with that name, drawing a new circle next to your original name for every word that comes to mind.



Example of a Brand Name Association Map: Teachstars

People will come up with apparently random associations, and that is precisely the point. Analyze these terms surrounding your potential brand name and evaluate whether they match the story that you are trying to tell. These questions can help you guide the debate with your team:

Positioning

Do these terms relate to the position that we are seeking to occupy in the marketplace?

Promise

Are these associations compatible with our brand promise?

Personas

Do most of these terms relate somehow with the need or aspiration that we are trying to satisfy for our buyers?

Product

Do these associations reflect well on the product experience that we deliver or plan to deliver?

Personality

Do most of these words make sense for the personality that our brand is trying to portray? Is there any connotation that contradicts this personality?

Pricing

Do any of these words contradict our price point? (You don't want a brand name that consistently associates with "cheap" when your product is premium.)

If you can't meet with customers physically, use online tools like Mural.ly to capture their word association maps remotely.

Brand Name A/B Testing

Introduce current and potential customers to your brand positioning briefly. Present two or three name options and ask them to select the one that appeals to them the most. Then ask why they made that choice. As you can imagine, the *why* is as important as the absolute voting results.

You can complete this measurement offline or try agile online polling tools like Pickfu or VerifyApp (Preference Test). These tools let you ask a question, provide two name options, and collect the extremely important *whys*.

Here's what such a test would look like:

The screenshot shows a PickFu poll interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Examples, Pricing, FAQ, and buttons for + New Poll, Sign In, and OpenID. Below this is a welcome message: "WELCOME TO PICKFU. MAKE A POLL, GET CROWDSOURCED RESPONSES. IT'S QUICK, EASY & INSIGHTFUL. LEARN MORE »" and a "CREATE A POLL NOW" button. To the right, it says "Published Sep 5, 2013".

The main question is: "If you were about to buy a air conditioner, which of these two air conditioners would you pick if they were both identical and cost the same amount?"

OPTION A: Timberman Air Conditioner (14% | 7 votes) - Represented by 7 small icons.

OPTION B (WINNER): Everest Air Conditioner (86% | 43 votes) - Represented by 43 small icons.

RESPONSES ANSWERS FROM RESPONDENTS

Responses to Option A:

1	I don't know the difference between the two, so I would choose this one simply because it is the first one listed.
2	Difficult to come up with a reason to justify my pick, but the only basis for choosing between is the brand name, and the term Timberman conjurs up a sturdier image to me than does Everest.
3	Timberman is a cooler name, never heard of either brand.
4	Can't remember.

Responses to Option B:

1	Everest sounds colder.
2	sounds better
3	Cool like the mountain.
4	I like option B because Everest makes me think of cold and that is definitely what I want in an air conditioner.

See that “Everest sounds colder” response to option B? That right there is brand name measurement *gold*.

Measuring Brand Positioning

In Chapter 3 we created a brand positioning statement around this template:

For (*target customer*)

Who (*statement of the need or opportunity*)

The (*product name*) is a (*product category*)

That (*key benefit, compelling reason to buy*)

Unlike (*primary competitive alternative*)

Our product (*statement of primary differentiation*)

The idea now is to measure whether this positioning is appropriate and being communicated correctly.

Is Our Brand Positioning Appropriate for Our Buyers' Needs?

The core of your brand positioning is the “key benefit”—the most compelling reason to buy your product or service. Using a research technique called *laddering*, you can interview existing and potential customers to unveil what they believe is your brand’s most important value added. After all, it is *them* we are creating value for, right?

The way laddering works is that you start out with the question, “Why is that important to you?” and basically repeat it until you figure out what the key benefit is, far beyond the product’s evident characteristics. The technical way to say it is you are *probing* the interviewee to unearth a deeper truth.

After you’ve conducted a series of one-on-one interviews, collect your current and potential customers’ answers and start finding affinities between them. The process is an informed way to answer:

What is the key benefit that makes my brand important for these people?

Sometimes customers won’t be able or willing to articulate why something is important to them. In these cases (and in any case, really), you can take the ethnographic observation route. I mentioned this technique in [Chapter 3](#). It

deals with immersing ourselves in the context (place, time) where our product or service will be used and gathering insights about their value to the user.

Is Our Brand Positioning Coming Through Correctly?

The best way to know what they're "getting" is to listen to what they're "giving."

It's time to see how your customers are defining your brand's positioning in *their* terms and analyze whether this matches the message that you are putting out into the world.

Warning: this is going to take some big-picture thinking on your part. None of these brand story elements are as black and white as the communication strategies that we measured in [Chapter 6](#). We are looking at qualitative data here.

Traditionally, brands took forever to build. By the time your market research gave you *some sort* of direction of where consumers were going, and you *finally* communicated based on that insight, it was too late and consumers were going elsewhere. The Internet has changed that. We can measure today, learn tomorrow morning, and redesign by tomorrow night. If you're Oreo, you can even learn while consumers watch the Superbowl and rewrite your brand story to resonate with them...within 2.5 minutes. Take a look at the upcoming Lean Branding case if this sounds interesting to you.

That being said, there is a technique called *content analysis* that you can use to discover patterns within your existing customers' inputs. At this point in time, you've already created several channels to collect these inputs:

- Their comments about your brand in your social profiles (feeds, walls)
- Their comments about you in their own profiles (use social search engines to find what is being said about your brand)
- Their evaluations and comments in whatever review systems you've put in place

LEAN BRANDING CASE: OREO

It's the night of the 2013 Super Bowl and over 100 million viewers can't believe their eyes: the stadium has gone dark. Meanwhile, Oreo decides to quickly take advantage of the opportunity to share its brand story. This is what the world saw that night.



Oreo Cookie

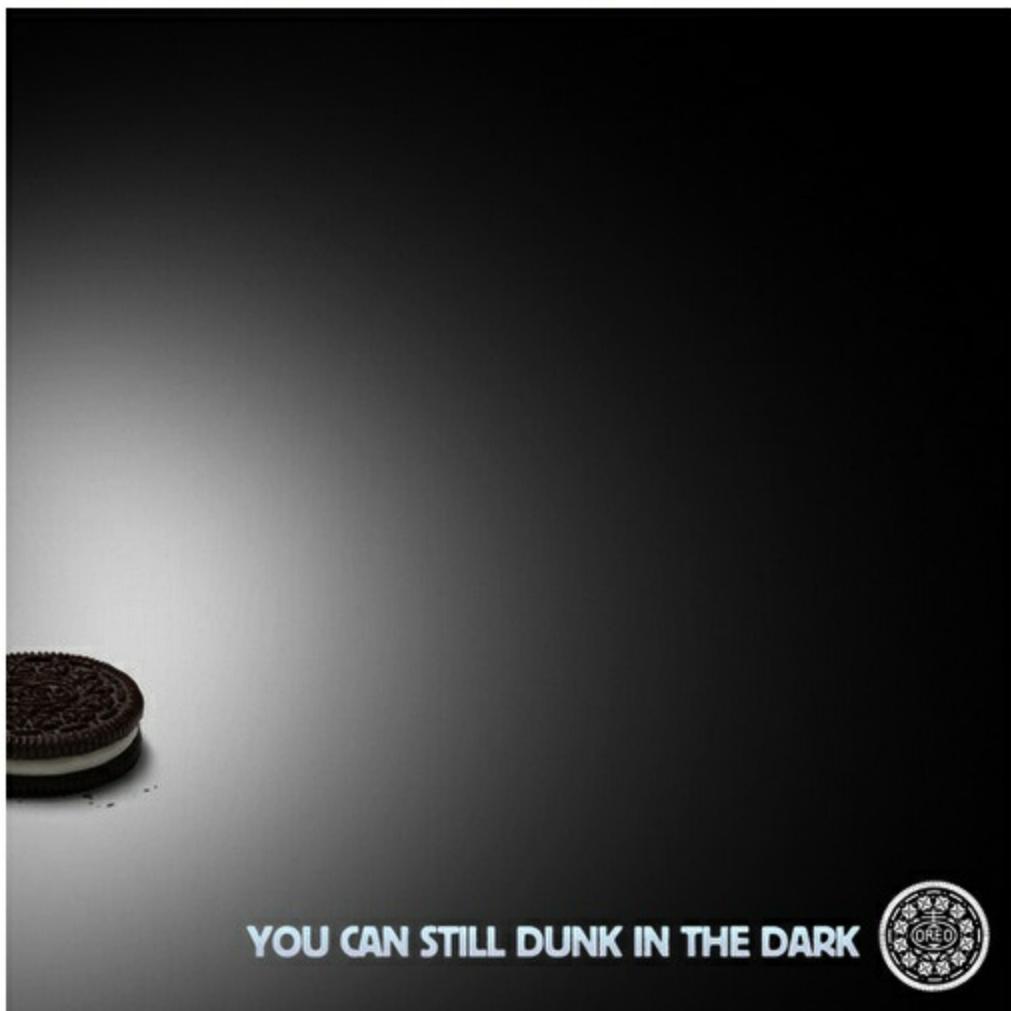
@Oreo



Follow

Power out? No problem.

Reply Retweet Favorite Buffer More HootSuite



RETWEETS
15,772

FAVORITES
6,515



7:48 PM - 3 Feb 2013

Flag media

“Power out? No problem. You can still dunk in the dark.”

Lisa Mann, who led Oreo’s marketing efforts at the time, told *Forbes*:

Oreo is a real-time brand, a real-time marketer, and we are a part of our culture and the fabric of our community. It is our objective to be as relevant today as we were 100 years ago when we launched. We have a recipe for success and we make sure we protect that and keep that alive for our consumers. We know our role of the brand is about keeping childhood innocence alive—seeing the world through Oreo eyes. [70]

The message was retweeted over 15,000 times and favorited by over 6,000 users. Oreo’s social media profiles in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram burst with activity. Welcome to the era of real-time brands.

Measuring Brand Promise

As we saw [Chapter 3](#), the brand promise is a condensed version of your positioning where the key benefit is translated into a short, memorable format. When we test our brand positioning using any of the techniques described earlier, we are simultaneously detecting any inconsistencies with our promise.

However, there are infinitely many ways to condense a brand’s positioning, and a simple change in words can confuse or engage consumers.

To make sure that our brand promise is resonating well with our audience, let’s test whether consumers make the expected associations when they are exposed to it for a short period of time.

Though you can replicate this technique offline, there is a handy app called *5 Second Test* that offers an effective way out. *5 Second Test* exposes your customers to any type of content for five seconds and allows you to draft one or more questions to ask at the end. There are many interesting uses for this tool, but in this case you can do the following:

1. Show your customers the brand promise, displayed over an unobtrusive background (zoomed-in landing page header, white rectangle, business card mockup, etc.).
2. Have them stare at it for five seconds.

3. Ask the following:

- Name the one thing that you remember the most.
- Would you be interested in learning more about a product that promises this?
- Would you be interested in buying a product that promises this?

I can't overemphasize the importance of the five-second exposure. After all, how long *do* we spend looking at a brand's promise before we move on with our lives? Handing out your promise to customers and letting them stare at it for an hour before they give some type of feedback is nothing like the real context where this happens. In the 21st century, people zap. They just do.

Measuring Personas

Is your brand's ideal buyer persona anything like the person who is *actually* buying from you? To achieve resonance and enable traction, we need to make sure that the people whom we are designing and creating (basically working our brains off) reflect the *actual* human beings using our product or service.

Assumptions here are particularly dangerous. That's why we need to constantly look back into our customer base and make sure that their profile hasn't changed. If it has, it is our job as lean brand managers to create new buyer personas that fit reality. Since every single brand activity will be guided by these "fake buyers with very real needs," please never underestimate the importance of testing and retesting our persona assumptions.

People change, and so do their aspirations, and so should brands.

To figure out who our current buyers are, we can use a wide array of tools, some more sophisticated and time-consuming than others. Assuming that you're at a point where both time and resources are limited, here's a useful technique: *audience analytics*.

There are two important types of buyer data to keep track of:

Demographic data

How old they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their income is like, among other “hard numbers” related to who they are

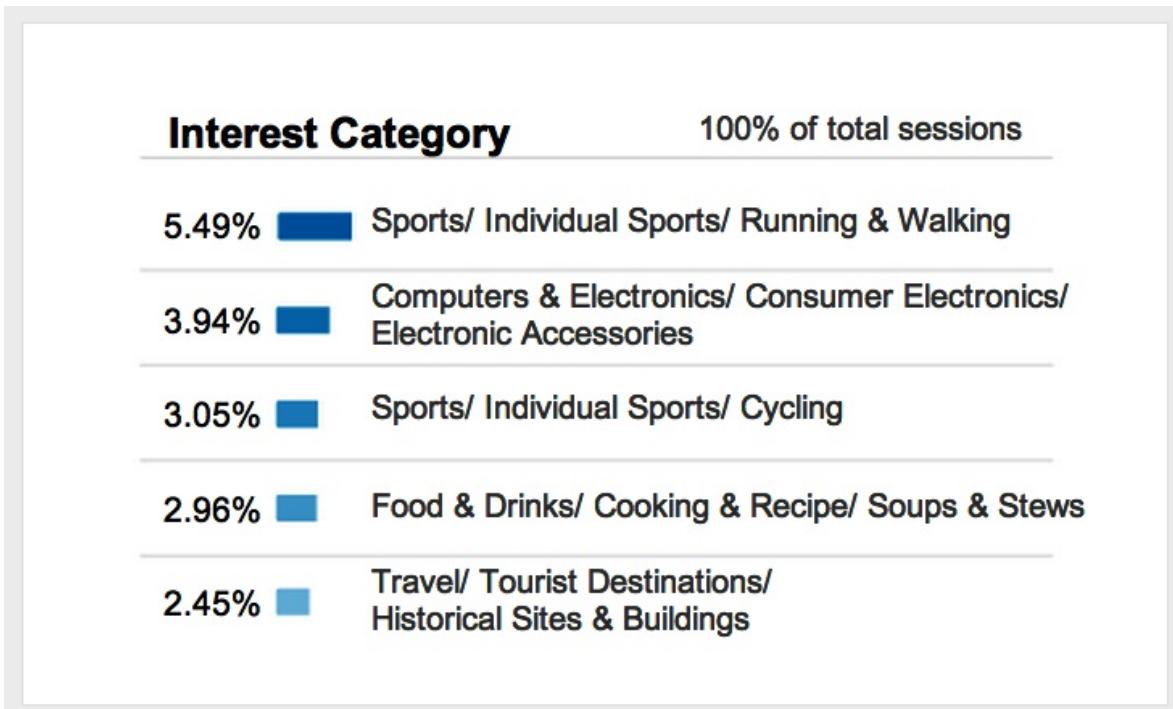
Psychographic data

Their lifestyle, activities, interests, and opinions, among other psychological traits.

Measuring Our Buyer Personas' Demographic Profile

We went over creating a Google Analytics profile in [Chapter 6](#), and now we're using it again to zero in on our audience's demographic data.

Go to your Google Analytics account and click on Audience → Demographics → Overview.



Measuring Our Buyer Personas' Psychographic Profile

Psychographics deals with your buyers' lifestyle and is slightly trickier to assess. Use this two-step approach to gather thorough insights:

1. Start by having a sizeable group of customers fill out a structured questionnaire. The best way to approach this is to create your own questions depending on the values, behaviors, and lifestyle aspects that you are trying to uncover.

Have customers fill it out your questionnaire offline or use an online survey tool like Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey.

Alternatively, use existing lifestyle scales. *Scales* is just another word for question banks used to measure a given phenomenon. You can use the US VALS (Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyles) Survey™.^[71]

2. Complement your insights with several in-depth interviews. Explore the following:
 - What is their lifestyle like? What are their hobbies? What types of places do they frequent? What are their homes and cars like? Where do they live?
 - What are their values like? Are they affiliated with any particular religion, political party, or thought system?
 - What is their media consumption like? Where do they get their news from? Which outlets do they trust the most?
 - What are their purchase habits like? Who or what influences their purchase decisions?

Measuring Our Brand Journey

As you saw in Chapter 3, the brand journey is made up of every single

touchpoint where we get a chance to add value for our customer. Two important questions surface as we try to determine if this journey is resonating well with customers:

- Are our current product attributes important for our customers?
- How do our customers perceive the value that our brand is trying to add throughout the journey?

Measuring the Relevance of Product Features: Buyer Expectations

A widely applied technique called KANO analysis allows us to see which product features will satisfy our customers the most so that we can focus our brand communications efforts there.^[72] It also helps to establish product development priorities. Here's how it works:

1. For each product attribute, ask your customer these two questions:
 - Functional question: “If X attribute were present, how would you feel?”
 - Dysfunctional question: “If X attribute were absent, how would you feel?”
2. Offer the following answer choices:
 - I like it that way.
 - It must be that way.
 - I am neutral.
 - I can live with it that way.
 - I dislike it that way.
3. Using an evaluation table like the following one, figure out which attribute falls under which category. After you've cross-referenced the

two questions, all of your product's attributes will be classified as:

- **Attractive.** This feature is *nice to have*. The customer will be more satisfied if this feature is present, but he won't be dissatisfied if it is absent.
- **Must-be.** This is something that people *expect* from your product. Lacking this feature will dissatisfaction the customer, but having it won't increase his satisfaction.
- **Reverse.** Customers actually *don't* want your product to have this feature. They are more satisfied when it is absent and less satisfied when it is present.
- **One-dimensional.** This is a *must-have* product feature. The customer will be more satisfied with the brand when the feature is there and less satisfied when it isn't.
- **Questionable result.** The customer's answer doesn't make sense. He will both be satisfied and dissatisfied by this feature. (Is that even possible?)
- **Indifferent.** Pretty self-explanatory. Customers won't be more satisfied if you have it, or dissatisfied if you don't.

4. Now use this information to make decisions regarding the most important features in your brand journey.

		DYSFUNCTIONAL QUESTION: If product attribute is absent, your customer feels:				
		LIKE	MUST-BE	NEUTRAL	LIVE WITH	DISLIKE
FUNCTIONAL QUESTION: <i>If product attribute is present, your customer feels:</i>	LIKE	QUESTIONABLE	ATTRACTIVE	ATTRACTIVE	ATTRACTIVE	ONE-DIRECTIONAL
	MUST-BE	REVERSE	INDIFFERENT	INDIFFERENT	INDIFFERENT	MUST-BE
	NEUTRAL	REVERSE	INDIFFERENT	INDIFFERENT	INDIFFERENT	MUST-BE
	LIVE WITH	REVERSE	INDIFFERENT	INDIFFERENT	INDIFFERENT	MUST-BE
	DISLIKE	REVERSE	REVERSE	REVERSE	REVERSE	QUESTIONABLE

Measuring Whether Our Existing Brand Journey Is Resonating Well: Buyer Perception

In order to resonate with consumers, our brand's product journey must deliver the value that they expect at different points in time. [Value opportunity analysis](#) is an effective technique to measure consumers' perception about the journey that we have created for them.^[73]

Consumers rate different values added by our product or service on a scale of low, medium, and high. Value opportunity analysis helps us visualize where our product journey is lacking and where it is fulfilling expectations. By showing us weak areas, this tool enables new opportunities for our brand to add value along the entire journey. Here's how to use it:

1. List the following opportunities and attributes and have customers rate each of them from low to high.

VALUE OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
EMOTION			
Adventure			
Independence			
Security			
Sensuality			
Confidence			
Power			
ERGONOMICS			
Comfort			
Safety			
Ease of Use			
AESTHETICS			
Visual			
Auditory			
Tactile			
Olfactory			
Taste			
IDENTITY			
Point in time			
Sense of place			
IMPACT			
Social			
Environmental			
CORE TECHNOLOGY			
Reliable			
Enabling			
QUALITY			
Craftsmanship			
Durability			
Profit Impact			
Brand Impact			
Extendable			

Cagan, J., C.M. Vogel, B. Nussbaum (2001)
Creating Breakthrough Products: Innovation from Product Planning to Program Approval, FT Press

2. Identify opportunities where your brand gets a low measure of success.
 Improve your product journey by working in this area.

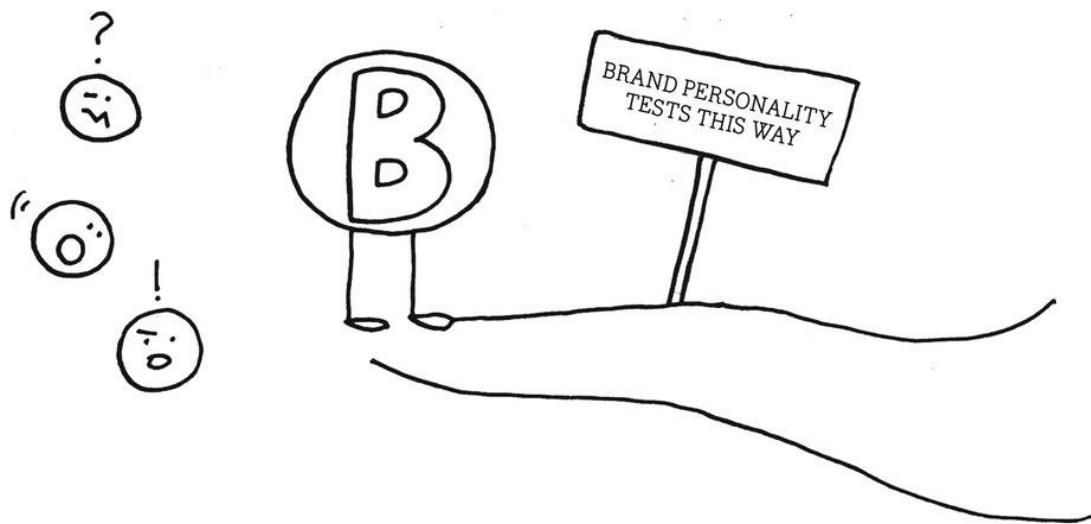
3. Identify strengths where your brand gets a high measure of success.
 Leverage them in your communications efforts.

Measuring Brand Personality

Let's face it. Evaluating someone's personality is probably the most complex task in the world. We never seem to be able to fully understand our own personality, let alone each other's. However, psychologists have somehow created sets of questions that get us slightly closer to unveiling a "person's unique pattern of traits," in J. P. Guilford's words.^[74]

These sets of questions are known as "personality tests," and we've lost track of how many of them are created every year. Individuals take these tests to figure out for themselves or someone else (usually hiring managers) what they are *really* like.

For obvious reasons, brands cannot possibly take these tests. And they don't need to. Because brands are a collective creation (remember, a brand is the *unique story* that consumers recall when they think of you) and consumer perception *is* reality.



So instead of having brands take personality tests (we've established this isn't cosmically possible), we have *consumers* take them.

Short questionnaires can reveal what personality traits consumers perceive from our brand. One of the ways to do this is to make a list of personality traits and ask people how well they describe our brand on a scale from 1 to 5,

where 1 is “not at all descriptive” and 5 is “extremely descriptive.”

BRAND PERSONALITY PROFILE

	<i>Not at all descriptive</i>	<i>Extremely descriptive</i>		
	1	2	3	
	4	5		
Adventurous				
Agile				
Altruistic				
Analytical				
Artistic				
Assertive				
Brave				
Calm				
Candid				
Capable				
Careless				
Caring				
Cautious				
Charismatic				
Charming				
Child-like				
Classy				
Clever				
Coherent				
Competent				
Confident				
Conservative				
Consistent				
Controlling				
Cooperative				
Courageous				
Crafty				
Creative				
Curious				
Defiant				
Delicate				
Determined				
Devoted				
Diligent				
Diplomatic				
Disciplined				
Discreet				
Disruptive				
Dramatic				
Eager				
Easy-going				
Eccentric				

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To explore other personality associations that your customers have, add a final question like:

How else would you describe this brand's personality? Select all that apply:

Other: _____

Measuring Pricing

As you can imagine, every single price testing method out there is flawed or biased in some way. Real-life pricing experiments can irritate existing and potential customers, and surveys are naturally biased (people are responding based on a hypothetical scenario, after all).^[75]

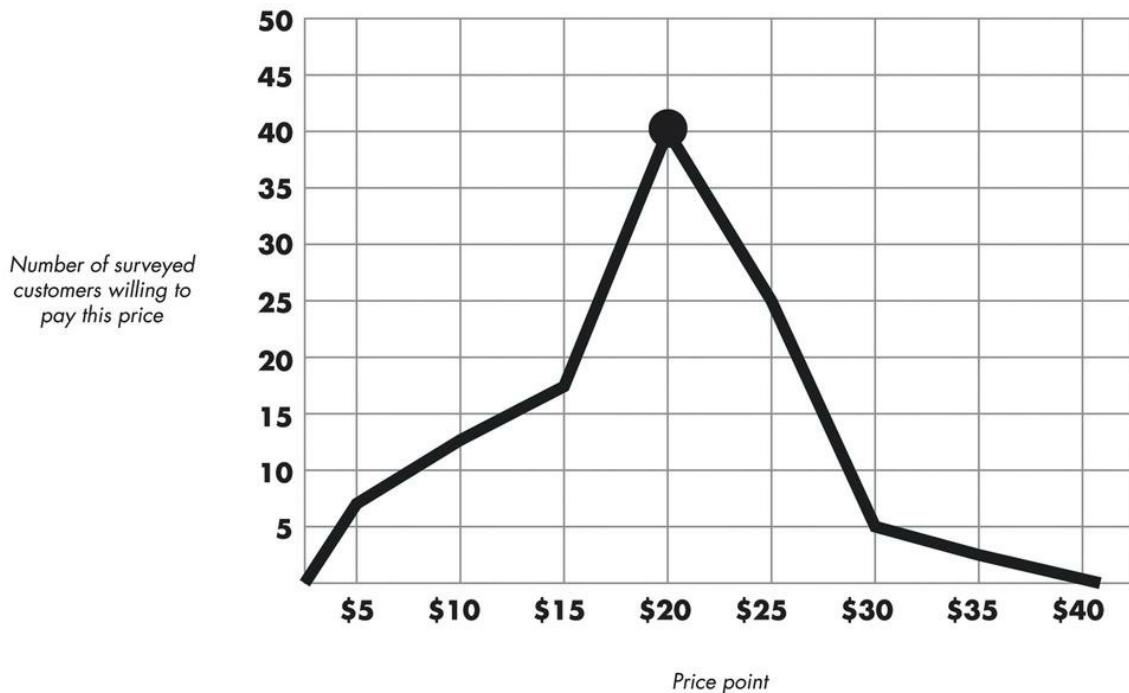
In fact, the single most important evidence that a pricing strategy is resonating well with consumers is that a significant amount of them are buying.

The very best we can do is to *approximate* our buyers' ideal pricing point(s). This approximation is what economists call the "willingness to pay," and because you've already measured which features are most important to your buyer personas (earlier in this chapter), you have a head start in figuring this out:

1. Select two or three features that your customers consider most important. The KANO analysis introduced earlier in this chapter can help you decide.
2. Inform your respondent about these features.
3. Formulate the question: "Would much would you be willing to pay for this?" Have your respondent provide a price. Alternatively, you could give her price range options, but this would be more limiting.
4. Plot how many of your respondents would be willing to pay each price point.
5. Confirm your insights with other research techniques available to you like open-ended interviews, competitive analysis (how much are

competitors charging for a similar product or service?), and split testing (at your own risk).

MEASURING OUR BRAND'S PRICING STRATEGY: WILLINGNESS TO PAY



Recap

Resonance is about having a compelling and context-specific answer for your buyer's "what's in it for me?" question. This chapter dealt with the different ways to measure whether your brand story ingredients are resonating well with your audience. The key here is to make sure you test your brand story's recipe with whomever you're cooking it for.

Brand/market fit aligns our core promise, positioning, product journey, and personality with the aspirations of a specific set of buyer personas. But identifying these aspirations is not so straightforward. Sometimes customers won't be able or willing to articulate why something is important to them. In these and other cases, you can take the ethnographic observation route. Observe how your customers are defining your brand's positioning in their

terms and analyze whether this matches the message that you are putting out into the world.

People change, and so do their aspirations, and so should brands. It is our job as lean brand managers to create new buyer personas that fit reality.



[[69](#)] Marc Andreesen, “Product/Market Fit,” Stanford University, June 25, 2007
<http://stanford.io/1peaV6D>.

[[70](#)] Jennifer Rooney, “Behind The Scenes Of Oreo’s Real-Time Super Bowl Slam Dunk,” *Forbes Magazine*, February 4, 2013, <http://onforb.es/1pebe1k>.

[[71](#)] <http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/surveynew.shtml>

[[72](#)] This technique is named after Professor Noriaki Kano, who developed it in the 1980s. Kano is currently Professor Emeritus at the Tokyo University of Science.

[[73](#)] Value opportunity analysis was introduced by Jonathan Cagan and Craig M. Vogel in *Creating Breakthrough Products: Innovation from Product Planning to Program Approval* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2001).

[[74](#)] J. P. Guilford, *Personality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

[[75](#)] I find it dangerous for brands to split-test different pricing schemes live, with real customers. There is just too much real-time conversation going on between brands, customers and brands, and customers and their peers. Unless you have a reasonable and transparent *differential pricing* strategy, avoid these types of experiments. It’s one thing to test headlines and an entirely different thing to make some customers feel like you’re ripping them off.

Chapter 8. Brand Identity

Let me show you something fascinating. Look at each of the following images in the left column and match them up to any of the terms in the right column:

Image	Association
↗	Technology
✿	Cooking
⌚	Conversation
🧭	Exploration

Now, isn't *this* convenient? Brands that you are probably familiar with understand and leverage existing symbolic associations to create logos that trigger them. If you matched exploration with a compass rose in the previous exercise, a similar association will come to mind when you look at Safari's logo. As a web browser, Safari benefits from being associated with terms like *exploration* and *search*.

Image	Association	Brand visual identity	Brand name
↗	Cooking		Betty Crocker
✿	Technology		Android
⌚	Exploration		Safari
🧭	Conversation		Twitter

I am *not* saying that your logo should be literal, or image-based. Or that it is the only visual symbol that carries meaning (think about color and typography). Read on to find out the true importance of building and

measuring your brand's visual identity.

A Little Consumer Psychology for a Change

You just matched a series of visual symbols to the functions they seem to enable. Listen, I didn't come up with these associations. They are deep-rooted, consistent, and continuously reinforced by the ton of media that you are exposed to daily. Designers know, use, transform, and transgress them every single day.

Let me make something clear: we weren't born knowing how to relate these concepts. Actually, someone raised in a different corner of the world might create completely different associations—and that's perfectly normal, too.

These thought patterns are a product of your upbringing, social interactions, and a natural propensity to adopt symbols. Put simply: we've grown up attaching meaning to visual symbols. Brands can use this.

The idea that we attach meaning to items in our surroundings and reinterpret them based on our social relations is nothing new. Renowned sociologists George Mead and Herbert Blumer worked on the idea of [symbolic interactionism](#) at the beginning of the 20th century. Here's what Blumer came up with in 1969:

- *Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.*
- *The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society.*
- *These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.*^[76]

Now, what on earth does that have to do with consumption? Well, because we act based on the meaning that we attach to things, there is this notion of [symbolic consumption](#)—which is nothing more than the fact that products and services convey symbolic meaning well beyond their functional features.

[77]

Brands play in an exciting sandbox of symbolic meanings.

Throughout this book you've seen how lean brands are in the business of taking customers from A to B, where B is whom they want to be. To be able to portray our brand as a viable road from A to B, we need to communicate its meaning as a "problem solver." Visual symbols help us express those meanings.

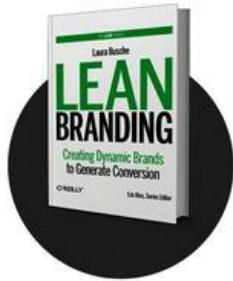
Trust me on this:

If you don't have time to see what your brand's visual identity means, you better have time to fix it when nobody else cares.

Now, because our brand's visual identity is the "gateway" to creating those meanings, you can already start to calculate the massive importance of getting it right.

WE'VE GROWN UP
attaching meaning
to visual symbols.

Brands can use this.



Back to Action: Measuring Your Brand's

Visual Identity

Measuring how effective our brand's visual identity is at conveying our brand story for a particular set of buyer personas is a key endeavor. Throughout this chapter, we will take a look at practical ways to measure the effectiveness of our brand symbol ingredients (which we created back in [Chapter 4](#)):

- Logo
- Color palette
- Typography
- Collateral: one-sheet
- Stationery
- Slide decks

To measure the effectiveness of our brand's visual symbols in establishing a compelling, conversion-friendly identity, we will look at the following aspects:

Awareness

How well our brand's visual symbols cut through the clutter and become memorable.

Positive or negative affect

Consumers' spontaneous favorable or unfavorable reaction to our brand's visual symbols.

Emotional impression

The types of emotions activated by our brand's visual symbols. This experience should come alive throughout your product journey.

Feedback

Our consumers' open-ended input for improvement.

Conversion

The relationship between our brand's visual symbols and our consumers' purchase intention (or the intention to engage in whichever other action you have defined as "conversion").

Measuring Your Brand's Logo: Asking the Right Questions

You can brief respondents about your brand positioning before you start applying any of these techniques. Communicating the positioning template in **Chapter 3** should be enough to give them some context.

What you'll see next are general prompts that can be refined based on the specific data that you are looking for. If, for instance, you don't want to know simply whether users "like or dislike this logo" but rather if they "like or dislike this logo's colors," you can draft more specific prompts for your tests. Adjust the wording as needed to better reflect your brand's positioning.

Each of these tests reveals a different aspect about your brand's logo. When time is lacking, select one or more that unveil the actionable information that you need the most.

For each tested component, you will see both an online and offline measurement tool. Here are some fascinating features that you will want to look into:

They'll find respondents for you

Some of these research tools offer respondents based on the demographic and/or psychographic profiles that you discovered before (see **Measuring Personas** in **Chapter 7**). Try SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com). A handy tool called Ethnio (www.ethn.io) will even recruit respondents by intercepting your own website's visitors.

They'll integrate with social media

Askalll (www.askalll.com) and Voice (www.voicepolls.com), for example, are short preference polls that you can embed in your blog or share in social networks. Cupli (www.cup.li) integrates with Facebook to tap into your fan base and invite them to answer questions.

No matter what tool you use, avoid relying on a single customer's perception to inform your brand design decisions. Instead, collect a sizeable number of respondents and find affinities once you have amassed a substantial data pool. Look out for patterns and ideas that seem to come up more frequently.

Measuring logo effectiveness	
Testing for Awareness	
Will our symbols cut through the clutter?	
Online tool	Memory Test, by VerifyApp, or Five Second Test app
Offline tool	Memory test: expose consumer to logo and remove after five seconds
Sample prompt	What do you recall about this logo?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single logo
Why this measurement matters	By testing what consumers remember from your logo in a few seconds, you are effectively tapping into their first impression of your brand.
Testing for Positive or negative affect	
Do consumers like or dislike this symbol? Why?	
Online tool	Thumbs Up/Down test by InfluenceApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Do you like or dislike this logo? Why? On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you like this logo?

Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single logo
Why this measurement matters	At first glance, consumers are reporting whether they experience negative or positive affect regarding your logo. This may define whether they continue to explore what your brand offers.
Testing for Comparative advantage	
What do consumers think makes this symbol stronger than others?	
Online tool	Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Which of these two logo options appeals to you the most?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Two logos (A/B)
Why this measurement matters	By comparing two logo designs side-by-side, and explaining why they choose either one, consumers will reveal the elements that make each one visually powerful or weak.
Testing for Emotional Impression	
Does this symbol generate the desired emotional response?	
Online tool	Mood Test by VerifyApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey (no facial expressions available; emotions must be shown as text labels)
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	How did this logo make you feel?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single logo
Why this measurement matters	This tool presents a series of facial expressions and labels that describe consumers' emotions. By selecting any given expression, they reveal what type of emotional impression your logo is activating.

Testing for Feedback

How do consumers think this symbol can be improved?

Online tool	Annotation or Comment Test by VerifyApp, InfluenceApp, or 5 Second Test app Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	What do you think about the logo you just saw?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single logo
Why this measurement matters	Consumers get a chance to deliver open feedback in case none of the preceding options allow them to express exactly what they perceive.

Testing for Conversion potential

Do they intend to buy our product or service based on this visual symbol only?

Online tool	Single logo: InfluenceApp or 5 Second Test app Two logos: Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Single logo: Would you purchase ^[a] X product? Two logos: If you were buying X, which of these two products would you purchase if they were both identical and the same price?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single/two logos
Why this measurement matters	Learn about your customers' purchase intention based solely on the aesthetically different logo choices that you expose them to. This gives you an idea about the influence of your logo design in conversion.

[a] If your conversion act is not defined as "purchase," modify the language to reflect whatever your desired path for customers is (visit, subscribe, call, etc.).

Typography

I've found that most consumers are not as opinionated about images (like logos) as they are about typography. The subtle nuances of different kinds of fonts are not as evident to the average customer, despite being deeply influenced by typographic choices around them. That being said, some of the questions that follow won't be feasible for every single type of customer.

Some of the simpler aspects that you can measure are a given font's *comparative advantage*, *emotional impression*, and *conversion potential*. Because comparative advantage and conversion questions can show two fonts side-by-side, we can gather valuable input from customers who would otherwise completely miss the difference; it is easier to notice the impact of a font choice when you can compare two options.

Remember to expose your respondents to a single word (that can be your brand name) in a neutral color (black) and a single size across the board. You don't want to confuse the impact of type with, for example, the impact of color.

Measuring typography effectiveness	
Testing for Awareness	
Will our symbols cut through the clutter?	
Online tool	Memory Test, by VerifyApp, or Five Second Test app
Offline tool	Memory test: expose consumer to your brand name written with black letters (using the font that you are testing) and remove after five seconds
Sample prompt	What do you recall about this font?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single font (in black)
Why this measurement matters	By testing what consumers remember from your font in a few seconds, you are effectively tapping into one of their first impressions about your brand. Even if typography isn't clear to them, consumers will reveal instinctively how it impacts their behavior.

Testing for Positive or negative affect

Do consumers like or dislike this symbol? Why?

Online tool	Thumbs Up/Down Test by InfluenceApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Do you like or dislike this font? Why? On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you like this font?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single font (in black)
Why this measurement matters	At first glance, consumers are reporting whether they experience negative or positive affect regarding your typographic choice. This may define whether they continue to explore what your brand offers.

Testing for Comparative advantage

What do consumers think makes this symbol stronger than others?

Online tool	Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Which of these two font options appeals to you the most?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Two fonts (same size, in black)
Why this measurement matters	By comparing two typographic choices side-by-side, and explaining why they choose either one, consumers will reveal the elements that make each one visually powerful or weak.

Testing for Emotional Impression

Does this symbol generate the desired emotional response?

Online tool	Mood Test by VerifyApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey (no facial expressions available; emotions must be shown as text labels)

Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	How did this font make you feel?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single font (in black)
Why this measurement matters	This tool presents a series of facial expressions and labels that describe consumers' emotions. By selecting any given expression, they reveal what type of emotional impression your typographic choice is activating.
Testing for Feedback	
How do consumers think this symbol can be improved?	
Online tool	Annotation or Comment Test by VerifyApp, InfluenceApp, or 5 Second Test app Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	What do you think about the font you just saw?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single font (in black)
Why this measurement matters	Consumers get a chance to deliver open feedback in case none of the preceding options allow them to express exactly what they perceive.
Testing for Conversion potential	
Do they intend to buy our product or service based on this visual symbol only?	
Online tool	Single font: InfluenceApp or 5 Second Test app Two fonts: Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Single font: Would you purchase ^[a] X product? Two fonts: If you were buying X, which of these two products would you purchase if they were both identical and the same price?

Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single/two fonts (equal size, in black)
Why this measurement matters	Learn about your customers' purchase intention based solely on the different fonts that you expose them to. This gives you an idea about the influence of your typographic choice in conversion.
[a]	If your conversion act is not defined as "purchase," modify the language to reflect whatever your desired path for customers is (visit, subscribe, call, etc.).

Color

As with typography, color decisions might seem slightly more abstract for the “untrained eye.” Though I actually *hate* using that term to refer to consumers (or anyone else), it *is* a fact that the average person, not having received any formal design education, *may* not be familiar with color palette choices and their implications. *May*.

(I happen to think that 21st-century consumers are “designers by exposure.”)

What they *are* familiar with is their purchase decision. And whether they are able to articulate it or not, color plays an important role in the perception that influences that decision. In short:

Color affects perception. Perception affects purchase.

We better figure out how this color thing is playing out for our brand.

While looking at the following chart, bear in mind that you can test both individual color swatches and combinations (more than one swatch). However, color palettes are usually best at conveying a certain mood that customers will feel more comfortable responding to. Maybe red tells you nothing, but paired with green it instantly *feels* like Christmas.

Measuring color palette effectiveness	
Testing for Awareness	
Will our symbols cut through the clutter?	
Online tool	Memory Test, by VerifyApp, or Five Second Test app

Offline tool	Memory test: expose consumer to your color palette and remove after five seconds
Sample prompt	What do you recall about this color palette?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single color palette
Why this measurement matters	By testing what consumers remember from your color palette in a few seconds, you are effectively tapping into one of their first impressions about your brand.

Testing for Positive or negative affect

Do consumers like or dislike this symbol? Why?

Online tool	Thumbs Up/Down Test by InfluenceApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Do you like or dislike this color palette? Why? On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you like this font?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single color palette
Why this measurement matters	At first glance, consumers are reporting whether they experience negative or positive affect regarding your color palette. This may define whether they continue to explore what your brand offers.

Testing for Comparative advantage

What do consumers think makes this symbol stronger than others?

Online tool	Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Which of these two color palette options appeals to you the most?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Two color palettes (A/B)

exposed to	
Why this measurement matters	By comparing two color palettes side-by-side, and explaining why they choose either one, consumers will reveal the elements that make each one visually powerful or weak.
Testing for Emotional Impression	
Does this symbol generate the desired emotional response?	
Online tool	Mood Test by VerifyApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey (no facial expressions available; emotions must be shown as text labels)
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	How did this color palette make you feel?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single color palette
Why this measurement matters	This tool presents a series of facial expressions and labels that describe consumers' emotions. By selecting any given expression, they reveal what type of emotional impression your color palette is activating.
Testing for Feedback	
How do consumers think this symbol can be improved?	
Online tool	Annotation or Comment Test by VerifyApp, InfluenceApp, or 5 Second Test app Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	What do you think about the color palette you just saw?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single color palette
Why this measurement matters	Consumers get a chance to deliver open feedback in case none of the preceding options allow them to express exactly what they perceive.

Testing for Conversion potential Do they intend to buy our product or service based on this visual symbol only?	
Online tool	Single color palette: InfluenceApp or 5 Second Test app Two color palettes: Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Single color palette: Would you purchase ^[a] X product? Two color palette: If you were buying X, which of these two products would you purchase if they were both identical and the same price?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single/two color palettes
Why this measurement matters	Learn about your customers' purchase intention based solely on the aesthetically different color palette choices that you expose them to. This gives you an idea about the influence of your color palette in conversion.
<small>[a]</small> If your conversion act is not defined as "purchase," modify the language to reflect whatever your desired path for customers is (visit, subscribe, call, etc.).	

Collateral

One-sheets are a key piece in your communications strategy because they determine the kind of information that recipients have access to. Optimizing the contents of this document will improve your chances of getting whoever receives it to go down a desired course of action (convert). As you saw in [Chapter 6](#), when we create brand communications assets directed specifically at the press (e.g., press release, collateral) it is important to remember that there is somewhat of a double conversion happening:

1. The reporter's decision to feature your brand
2. The final audience's decision to convert (once they read the outcome of 1)

Measuring collateral piece effectiveness

Testing for Awareness

Will our symbols cut through the clutter?

Online tool	Memory Test, by VerifyApp, or Five Second Test app
Offline tool	Memory test: expose consumer to the piece of collateral and remove after five seconds
Sample prompt	What do you recall about this document?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single collateral piece
Why this measurement matters	By testing what consumers remember from your collateral piece in a few seconds, you are effectively tapping into one of their first impressions about your brand.

Testing for Positive or negative affect

Do consumers like or dislike this symbol? Why?

Online tool	Thumbs Up/Down Test by InfluenceApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Do you like or dislike this document? Why? On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you like this document?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single collateral piece
Why this measurement matters	At first glance, consumers are reporting whether they experience negative or positive affect regarding your collateral piece. This may define whether they continue to explore what your brand offers.

Testing for Comparative advantage

What do consumers think makes this symbol stronger than others?

Online tool	Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview

Sample prompt	Which of these two documents appeals to you the most?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Two collateral pieces
Why this measurement matters	By comparing two collateral pieces side-by-side, and explaining why they choose either one, consumers will reveal the elements that make each one visually powerful or weak.

Testing for Emotional Impression

Does this symbol generate the desired emotional response?

Online tool	Mood Test by VerifyApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey (no facial expressions available; emotions must be shown as text labels)
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	How did this document make you feel?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single collateral piece
Why this measurement matters	This tool presents a series of facial expressions and labels that describe consumers' emotions. By selecting any given expression, they reveal what type of emotional impression your collateral piece is activating.

Testing for Feedback

How do consumers think this symbol can be improved?

Online tool	Annotation or Comment Test by VerifyApp, InfluenceApp, or 5 Second Test app Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	What do you think about the document that you just saw? What would you remove or dedicate less space to? What type of information would you add or give more space to? What did you find interesting?

Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single collateral piece
Why this measurement matters	Consumers get a chance to deliver open feedback in case none of the preceding options allow them to express exactly what they perceive.
Testing for Conversion potential	
Do they intend to buy our product or service based on this visual symbol only?	
Online tool	Single collateral piece: InfluenceApp or 5 Second Test app Two collateral pieces: Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Single collateral piece: Would you purchase ^[a] X product? Two collateral pieces: If you were buying X, which of these two products would you purchase if they were both identical and the same price?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single/two collateral pieces
Why this measurement matters	Learn about your customers' purchase intention based solely on the different collateral pieces that you expose them to. This gives you an idea about the influence of your collateral's visual appeal in conversion.
<small>[a]</small> If your conversion act is not defined as "purchase," modify the language to reflect whatever your desired path for customers is (visit, subscribe, call, etc.).	

Stationery: Business Card

When we last discussed our business cards in [Chapter 4](#), we were concerned with building an initial version. In this case, let's take a look at how to measure their effectiveness at achieving our intended goals.

Has it ever crossed your mind that you could do something besides crossing fingers to get your business card saved and used? Average business cards, and the rest of the components of your brand's stationery package, are usually produced based only on the aesthetic judgment of their designer. But

it isn't her who actually receives it, right? Like other aspects of your user experience, stationery pieces—and business cards in particular—can be measured for effectiveness. Long before someone tosses your precious contact information away, you will get an idea of how much awareness, positive affect, emotional impact, and conversion potential this piece is generating.

Measuring stationery piece effectiveness	
Testing for Awareness	
Will our symbols cut through the clutter?	
Online tool	Memory Test, by VerifyApp, or Five Second Test app
Offline tool	Memory test: expose consumer to the stationery piece and remove after five seconds
Sample prompt	What do you recall about this document?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single stationery piece
Why this measurement matters	By testing what consumers remember from your stationery piece in a few seconds, you are effectively tapping into one of their first impressions about your brand.
Testing for Positive or negative affect	
Do consumers like or dislike this symbol? Why?	
Online tool	Thumbs Up/Down test by InfluenceApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Do you like or dislike this document? Why? On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you like this document?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single stationery piece
Why this	At first glance, consumers are reporting whether they experience negative or

measurement matters	positive affect regarding your stationery piece. This may define whether they continue to explore what your brand offers.
Testing for Comparative advantage	What do consumers think makes this symbol stronger than others?
Online tool	Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Which of these two documents appeals to you the most?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Two stationery pieces
Why this measurement matters	By comparing two stationery pieces side-by-side, and explaining why they choose either one, consumers will reveal the elements that make each one visually powerful or weak.
Testing for Emotional Impression	
Does this symbol generate the desired emotional response?	
Online tool	Mood Test by VerifyApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey (no facial expressions available; emotions must be shown as text labels)
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	How did this document make you feel?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single stationery piece
Why this measurement matters	This tool presents a series of facial expressions and labels that describe consumers' emotions. By selecting any given expression, they reveal what type of emotional impression your stationery is activating.
Testing for Feedback	
How do consumers think this symbol can be improved?	

Online tool	Annotation or Comment Test by VerifyApp, InfluenceApp, or 5 Second Test app Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	What do you think about the document that you just saw? What information would you remove or make less prominent? What additional information would you include or make more prominent? What did you find interesting?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single stationery piece
Why this measurement matters	Consumers get a chance to deliver open feedback in case none of the preceding options allow them to express exactly what they perceive.

Testing for Conversion potential

Do they intend to buy our product or service based on this visual symbol only?

Online tool	Single stationery piece: InfluenceApp or 5 Second Test app Two stationery pieces: Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Single stationery piece: Would you purchase ^[a] X product? Two stationery pieces: If you were buying X, which of these two products would you purchase if they were both identical and the same price?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single/two stationery pieces
Why this measurement matters	Learn about your customers' purchase intention based solely on the different stationery pieces that you expose them to. This gives you an idea about the influence of your stationery's visual appeal in conversion.

[a] If your conversion act is not defined as "purchase," modify the language to reflect whatever your desired path for customers is (visit, subscribe, call, etc.).

Slide Decks

In case you are inquiring about your slide deck offline, also take note of the respondent's physical reactions to the presentation—without making it evident that you are doing so. Just being present in the room can intimidate your respondent and prevent him from reacting naturally to the content (i.e., yawning). Does he seem bored? Impressed? Excited? At which point in time (slide number)? An alternate way to handle this is to video-record the session.

Measuring slide deck effectiveness	
Testing for Awareness	
Will our symbols cut through the clutter?	
Online tool	Memory Test, by VerifyApp, or Five Second Test app
Offline tool	Memory test: expose consumer to slide deck and remove immediately after he is done with the last slide. Then, proceed with a structured interview.
Sample prompt	What do you recall about this presentation? Do you wish to know more about this brand based on what you saw? Would you share it with friends, family, and/or colleagues?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single slide deck
Why this measurement matters	By testing what consumers remember from your slide deck a few seconds after they're done viewing it, you are effectively tapping into one of their first impressions about your brand.
Testing for Positive or negative affect	
Do consumers like or dislike this symbol? Why?	
Online tool	Thumbs Up/Down test by InfluenceApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Do you like or dislike this presentation? Why? On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you like this presentation?

Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single slide deck
Why this measurement matters	At first glance, consumers are reporting whether they experience negative or positive affect regarding your slide deck. This may define whether they continue to explore what your brand offers.

Testing for Comparative advantage

What do consumers think makes this symbol stronger than others?

Online tool	Preference Test by VerifyApp or Pickfu Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	Which of these two presentations appeals to you the most? Why?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Two slide decks
Why this measurement matters	By comparing two slide decks side-by-side, and explaining why they choose either one, consumers will reveal the elements that make each one visually powerful or weak.

Testing for Emotional Impression

Does this symbol generate the desired emotional response?

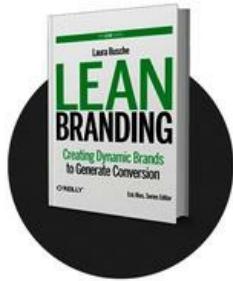
Online tool	Mood Test by VerifyApp Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey (no facial expressions available; emotions must be shown as text labels)
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	How did this presentation make you feel?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single slide deck
Why this measurement matters	This tool presents a series of facial expressions and labels that describe consumers' emotions. By selecting any given expression, they reveal what type of emotional impression your slide deck is activating.

Testing for Feedback

How do consumers think this symbol can be improved?

Online tool	Annotation or Comment Test by VerifyApp, InfluenceApp, or 5 Second Test app Online poll by Ask Your Target Market or SurveyMonkey
Offline tool	Self-administered questionnaire or structured interview
Sample prompt	What do you think about the presentation that you just saw? What would you remove or spend less time discussing? What would you spend more time discussing? What did you find interesting?
Option(s) the customer is exposed to	Single slide deck
Why this measurement matters	Consumers get a chance to deliver open feedback in case none of the preceding options allow them to express exactly what they perceive.

COLOR AFFECTS PERCEPTION
Perception affects purchase
*Do you have time for
color now?*



Recap

Your brand's visual identity plays a large role in the way you will be recognized in the marketplace and the meaning assigned to buying your product or service. Our visual associations are deep-rooted, consistent, and continuously reinforced by the media that we are exposed to daily. To be able to portray our brand as a viable road from A to B, we need to communicate its meaning as a “problem solver.” Visual symbols help us express those meanings because we have grown up learning how to create associations with them.

To measure the effectiveness of our brand's visual symbols in establishing a compelling, conversion-friendly identity, we can look at the level of awareness, positive and negative affect, emotional impression, comparative advantage, feedback, and conversion that they generate. No matter what tool you use, avoid relying on a single customer's perception to inform your brand design decisions. Instead, collect a sizeable number of respondents and find affinities once you have amassed a substantial data pool.

[[76](#)] Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism; Perspective and Method* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

[[77](#)] Sidney J. Levy, “Symbols for Sale,” *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 1959): 117–124; David Glen Mick, “Consumer Research and Semiotics: Exploring the Morphology of Signs, Symbols, and Significance,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, no. 2 (1986): 196–213; Russell W. Belk, “Possessions and the Extended Self,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no. 2 (1988): 139–168.

Part IV. Learn

In **Part II**, we laid out a basic set of brand components that need to be tested against reality. We proceeded to test how well they triggered conversion in **Part III**. At this point, you should have answered questions such as:

- Does our communications strategy reach the desired audience and convert new customers?
- Does our brand story resonate well with the needs and aspirations of those we seek to convert?
- Do our visual symbols generate the right impression and convey the correct meanings about our brand, attracting viewers into following desired action path (convert)?

In this section, we will synthesize our learning, pivot in new directions based on the data we've collected, and produce a working version of a brand that we can continue to build on.

Looking back at our Brand Learning Log (introduced in **Part II**), the gray area is where we should find ourselves.

TO MEASURE 			MEASURING 		MEASURED 		DATE 
BRANDING COMPONENT	BRANDING ASSUMPTION	CONVERSION GOAL	METRIC TO WATCH	EXPECTED RESULT	ACTUAL RESULT	WHAT WE LEARNED	WHEN WE LEARNED IT

Using everything that we've learned thus far, this section will show you how to pivot each of your brand components based on those lessons:

Brand rechannel (Chapter 9)

Which brand communication channels should we select, based on our target audience's preferences?

Brand reposition (Chapter 10)

Which elements of our brand story do not resonate well with our audience, hinder customer acquisition, and need to be changed? How can we go about doing this?

Brand redesign (Chapter 11)

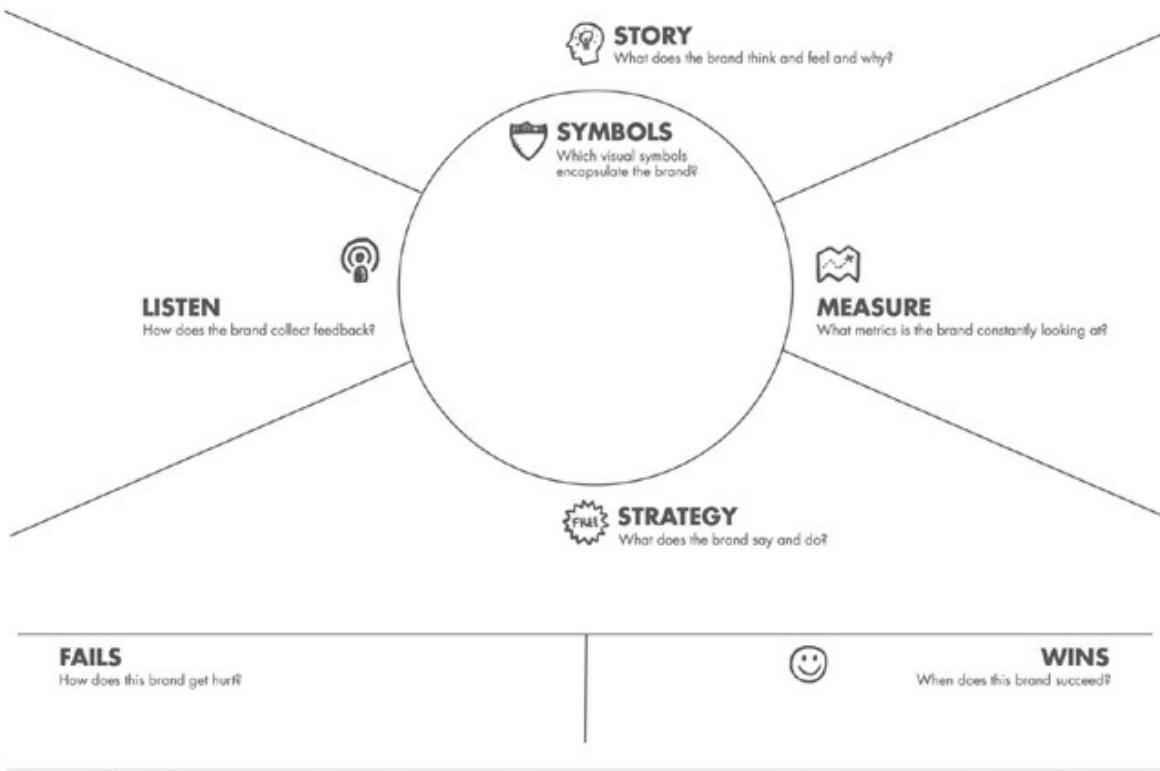
Which brand symbols dissuade or confuse new customers and need to be redesigned? How can we go about doing this?

The Lean Branding Map: Empathize with Your Brand

A helpful way to visualize our validated brand components—those we've built and tested so far—is to map them out. If you've followed the process in [Chapter 1](#) through [Chapter 8](#), filling out the following Lean Branding Map shouldn't be difficult.

Lay out the components that you've tested so far using sticky notes. This allows us to move them around and remove them as necessary. You can use a highlighter to signal components that have been tested, and another one to point out those that need further testing. This map should be visible to you and your team as you build, measure, and learn during the brand development process. If you created the Brand Wall we talked about in [Chapter 3](#), make sure the most updated version of this map is pinned onto that surface.

LEAN BRANDING MAP



www.leanbranding.com

Sometimes we fall in the trap of thinking that only the marketing and design teams need to be inspired and surrounded by brand elements. In fact, the more stakeholders know about what your brand stands for, the easier it will be for everyone to get on board and bring those symbols, story, and strategy to life.

That is precisely the purpose of the Lean Branding Map: to capture these brand elements so that everyone on your team can truly understand the story that you are building in the marketplace. This “understanding” is no different from the way we try to *empathize* with customers when we go outside and observe or interview them. The only difference is that now you and your stakeholders use this tool to empathize with *the brand*. To identify with it, put yourself in the brand’s shoes, know when it fails and when it wins—to truly live up to the brand.

Resistance to Change: Brand Friction

One of the key problems with iterating, evolving, and learning as your brand grows is something I call *brand friction*. You've been carrying around a fixed set of assets (files, documents, videos) for so long that the mere thought of changing (each and every one of) them terrifies you.

You've probably wondered about (and feared) any or all of the following:

- Will the market see me as “inconsistent”? (The idea here is to change the symbols and story only when necessary and strategy whenever possible.)
- Will I confuse the press? How can I pass on the news?
- Will customers be completely unable to recognize my brand anymore?
- How will I communicate this change to all of my team members?
- How can I communicate this change to existing and new customers?
- How can I share the new assets (story, symbols, strategy) with as little trauma as possible?

Behind these fears lies a two-sided sword that we've come to know as “consistency.” Let me tell you a few words about brand consistency. It is true, and has been proved repeatedly, that consumers learn to recognize brands over time when their symbols and stories have been positioned steadily. You know what the “Happiest Place on Earth Is” or what a giant yellow arched *M* stands for. You probably can figure out what social network is behind a light blue bird and what superstore is represented by a red bull’s-eye.

We know these things because we have been conditioned to relate them.

Consistency is important because it helps us establish our brand's longstanding message to the world and build the right associations that consumers use to recognize us. It is dangerous because a consistency obsession, on the other hand, can trap us in a strategy where little or no brand

learning is taking place. As you think about your own brand's consistency, ponder this for a bit:

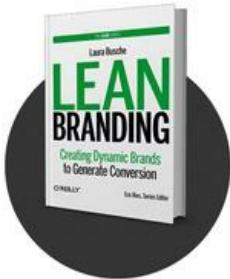
No brand has “cracked” the end-all story, symbols, and strategy because these things simply don’t exist.

A brand is better off learning. There's no use standing still in the marketplace when consumers' ideas of who they want to be are changing all over the place. Brands today are better off listening to these changes and learning from them. Lean brands have conversations, not monologues. They embrace the fact that their mission is to help consumers get closer to who they want to be. These brands are comfortable with the fact that this “who they want to be” is always evolving. So they evolve, too: iterating continuously in endless cycles of *building, measuring, and learning*. You've progressed through the first two in the previous eight chapters.

Having said that, please be cautious about the way you roll out changes in your brand's symbols, story, and strategy. Shredding your established brand recognition is not the point of learning. Optimizing conversion is.

The examples you will see throughout the following chapters are helpful to understand how learning can take place while protecting the messages that still make sense for your brand.

NO BRAND HAS CRACKED
the end-all story,
symbols and strategy
*because these things
simply don't exist.*



Chapter 9. Brand Rechannel

Imagine it's the year 1969. Elvis is king, Nixon is president, and you are grounded. While everyone else and their mom are figuring out a way to get to Woodstock, you are locked in trying to figure out how to build and sell this product. How can you get a large amount of people to know about the product, and hopefully buy? Well, it's 1969, so let me show you your options:

- Radio
- TV
- Phone
- Print ads
- Snail mail
- Trade shows and conventions

How does that sound? No Internet, no email, no websites, no pay-per-click ads, no cellphones, and *definitely* no social networking sites. Now consider the overwhelming costs of running an ad on TV when it still reigned in households. Think about your idea, your budget, and the type of advertising that you might have been able to afford. Imagine the uncertainty of not knowing who saw your message, for how long, and how much that cost you. Other than reach approximations and vague sales impact estimates, your return on investment was a giant question mark.

Fortunately, it's not the year 1969. Our communication channel options have never been as open, accessible, and measurable. Never have we been able to tap into specific niche communities like we can today. Does your brand need

to talk to moms? There's an online community for that. Are you looking for college students who might like your product? There's a social network for that. Is your brand's audience an elite group of vinyl record collectors? Trust me: there are hundreds of blogs for that.

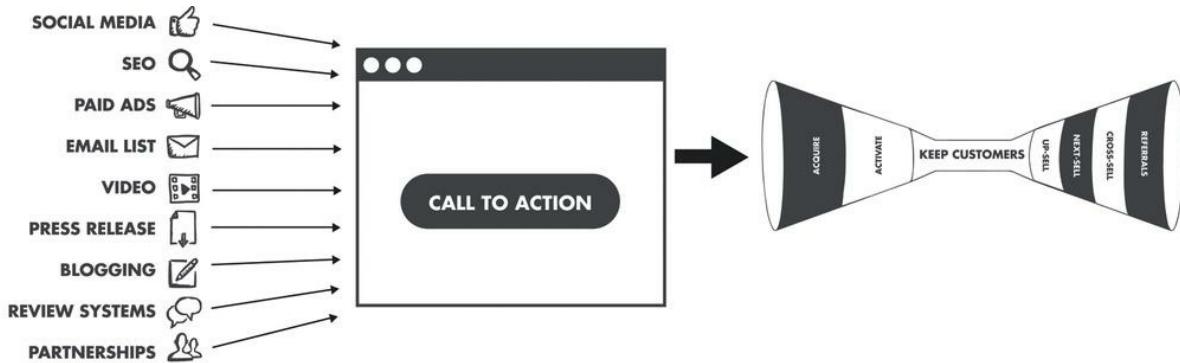
But with choice comes responsibility. Each channel has its own formats, rules, and audience type. A radio listener cannot be addressed like a magazine reader, for instance. While a channel whose format is audio-based places a premium on your spokesperson's tone of voice, a print ad demands more attention placed on imagery, copy, layout, and typography. Essentially, your brand story remains the same. The central message remains the same. What *does* change is the medium or *channel* that you are using to pass it on to the receiver and the way you adjust to its format. As I pointed out before, each channel comes with its own rules. Similarly, contemporary Internet-based channels create a wide array of possibilities that we need to prepare to tap into.

Back in [Chapter 5](#), we saw how a single brand message (that makes part of your overarching story) could be tailored to fit some of the most effective contemporary channels: email, online advertising, and social media profiles, among others. [Chapter 6](#) was all about measuring each channel's effectiveness for reaching your conversion goals: subscriptions, signups, purchases, and so on. It is now the time to take a look at how you can switch from one brand communications channel to the next without changing the essence of your brand story. This "switching" is what we will call *rechanneling* from now on.

With so many channels available to communicate your brand story, it can get confusing. This chapter is about learning from the way others have switched channels successfully.

Rechanneling and Conversion

In [Chapter 6](#), we saw how different communications channels can connect our customers with a desired action path and learned that the strength of that relationship is known as conversion.



Rechanneling involves changing the way in which we approach any of the existing communications channels to strengthen conversion. It also involves opening new (unexplored) ones with the potential to boost it.

With rechanneling, we are basically changing the way in which our brand is poured out into a world of consumer co-creation.

Let's take a look at some brands that have rechanneled successfully, following one or more learning lessons arising from continuous measurement.

OhMyDisney: Same Magic, Different Content

In March 2013, Disney launched a new blog called Oh My Disney that looked unlike anything else we'd ever seen before.^[78] At least from *Disney*.

For starters, Disney divided content into categories using common phrases drawn from Internet slang. Instead of the expected “Cute” or “Fun” labels, the site features “Awww,” “Whoa,” and “Yum.”



Content-wise, Disney's interactive team turned over to memes and animated GIFs. These content types have been widely successful with Millennials, a generation that was starting to grow up and now has a unique channel to continue relating to the Disney brand story.



What Your 20s Are Like, As Told By Disney GIFs

POSTED 8 MONTHS AGO

Tweet 69 Share 11 Pin It 348

Your 20s generally start out strong; you are young, you know it, and there seems to be no limit to your energy and optimism.



Disney's social engagement strategist, Emily Brandon, said the following during an interview published in the Walt Disney Company blog:

We develop content with the audience in mind first. We constantly monitor their response and fine-tune our strategy to give them more of what they love in unexpected ways. This approach has proven to deliver high audience participation.^[79]

Though the Disney brand story is essentially the same, the content was adapted to a new channel to cater to buyer personas that had “grown up.” Millennials were now looking at and enjoying Tumblr’s funny GIFs and Buzzfeed’s witty lists. Leveraging this opportunity, Disney opened Oh My Disney and rechanneled its brand story with a renewed content strategy.

Make it happen

Continuous measurement allowed Disney to realize that its buyer personas had changed. Now, not only did it have to cater to children, but to millennial men and women who were *once* these children and had grown up. In doing so, Disney opened a new brand communications channel that suited the interests and aspirations of this generational cohort. When was the last time

that you rechanneled your brand message to adapt it to a changing audience? Have you taken the time to measure how this audience has changed over time and to strategize how to pivot in response to it?

The following are a few questions that you may want to answer before moving into a new channel:

- What kind of language and tone is being used in the channel?
- How can you tailor your brand message to fit this new channel's possibilities?
- What does this channel's audience look like? What are the audience's demographic characteristics?
- How can you build initial traffic in this new channel?
- Are competing or substitute brands already here? What are they currently doing?
- If no competing or substitute brands are present in the channel, look at brands that target your intended audience. What are *they* doing?
- How will you make it attractive for a brand follower to join you on this new channel, while still connecting over existing channels? What will differentiate your content in this channel from your content elsewhere?

J.Crew: Its Most Pinteresting Catalog Yet

In August 2013, fashion retailer J.Crew published this tweet:



J.Crew J.Crew 
@jcrew

Want an exclusive first-look at our
September Style Guide before anyone else?
bit.ly/19t9d89 #SneakPeek

Reply Retweet Favorite Buffer More HootSuite

Pinterest J.Crew on Pinterest Sometimes things that don't seem to go together, do.
[View on web](#)

RETWEETS 148 FAVORITES 120

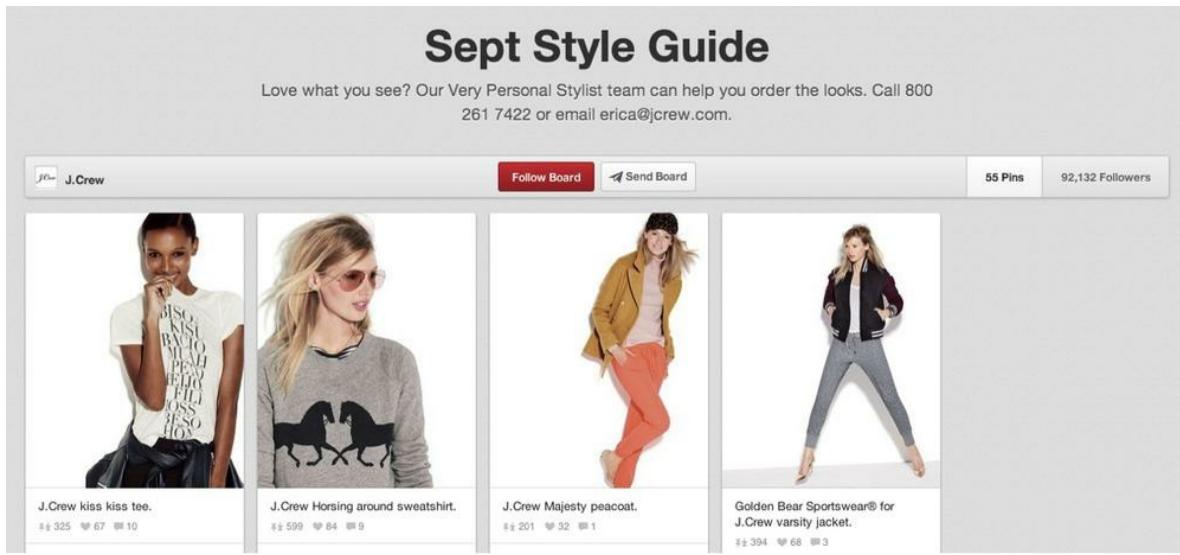
7:31 AM - 19 Aug 2013 Flag media

J.Crew

J.Crew debuted in 1983 with the mailing of its first catalog,^[80] while photo sharing site Pinterest took off in 2011. Countless communication channels can be opened in 28 years; just consider those that J.Crew built its brand upon: magazine ads, TV commercials, strategically designed storefronts, endorsements, and catalogs, among many others. It is fair to say that the J.Crew brand story was well positioned long before Pinterest's very first sketches. Why, then, did the newly created social network catch the giant retailer's attention?

Twenty-eight years is plenty of time for a brand to position itself consistently, but it is also an ample amount of time for its target buyers to change. To evolve in their needs, wants, and aspirations. To modify the way they shop, purchase, and share. With consumers' behavior changing, J.Crew leveraged Pinterest as a new channel to reach them.

In August 2013, J.Crew uploaded its entire *September Style Guide* on a Pinterest board for the first time ever. Fifty-five pins with all sorts of outfits debuted for online brand followers. For 28 years, the print catalog had been the public's first chance of looking at J.Crew's upcoming collection. Ever since August 2013, the brand publishes its looks on a new pinboard to cater to the thousands of followers who go online to comment, like, share, and buy each of them.



As of summer 2014, J.Crew had over 150,000 Pinterest followers at pinterest.com/jcrew/.

Make it happen

J.Crew adapted an existing brand asset (its catalog) to an entirely new social media channel to amplify its conversion power. To do so, it had to adjust the catalog's format to fit the dynamics of pinning. Which existing brand symbols could you adjust to a new channel that your target audience is engaging with? Are there documents, images, or other multimedia assets that you can adapt to an attractive new brand communications channel?

Consider the following examples of brand assets or events and the ways in which they can be adapted to fit different communication channels.

Asset/Event	Product catalog
Offline	A print catalog
Website	Online store with a shopping cart
Blog	An embedded, interactive PDF file with links to individual products in your online store
Twitter	A link to your interactive PDF file and individual products in your online store
Facebook	A photo album with products in your catalog and links to the website

Pinterest	A board dedicated entirely to listing the products within a specific catalog or season
Instagram	Single product shots indicating where they can be bought; still-life print catalog images
Asset/Event	New product launch
Offline	A reception
Website	Feature the new product on your home page
Blog	A blog post outlining the new product's main features. Embed a simple yet effective explainer video.
Twitter	A link to your blog post, and a specific hashtag for the launch event attendees to use. Interactions with event attendees (retweets and replies).
Facebook	A link to your blog post, a Facebook event for the offline reception, a link to your explainer video, and a photo album that showcases the new product's main features in context. Mix product images with photos of actual customers using the product to solve a problem.
Pinterest	A board dedicated to showcasing what the new product's users have accomplished.
Instagram	Single, memorable shots from the offline event. An image of an actual customer using the product to solve a problem. If the customer has an Instagram account, make sure to mention her. Shorten your explainer video to a 3- to 15-second length and share it.
Asset/Event	Media coverage
Offline	Clip/print the article and pin it or save it for your team. If you own a retail space, find a way to display recent press coverage to boost consumer trust.
Website	Update your Press section by uploading the new piece.
Blog	Quote a few words from the article and provide a link to the full text, ideally hosted by the media outlet that generated the piece.
Twitter	Pull out a quote from the article and provide a link to the full version. If the reporter or media outlet has a Twitter account, make sure to mention him.
Facebook	Pull out a quote from the article and provide a link to the full version.
Pinterest	Pin the article onto a board dedicated to press coverage.

Instagram	Post a single shot of the physical magazine or newspaper where the article was published. If it is not available (e.g., coming from an online magazine), style an image using a printout of the article or photographing the physical screen where you can visualize it (a laptop, smartphone, or tablet).
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Groove: Landing Page Fiasco

In 2010, a customer analytics company called Groove launched its first landing page. It “built page after page and section after section, forging on without testing any of them on a single user.” Cofounder Alex Turnbull, who has since opened up a blog documenting Groove’s mistakes, published the following thought:

Hindsight is 20/20. Hindsight can also be incredibly painful.^[81]

After the first two weeks of launching the landing page, Alex looked at analytics data and found out that Groove’s conversion rate was less than a dismal 2%.

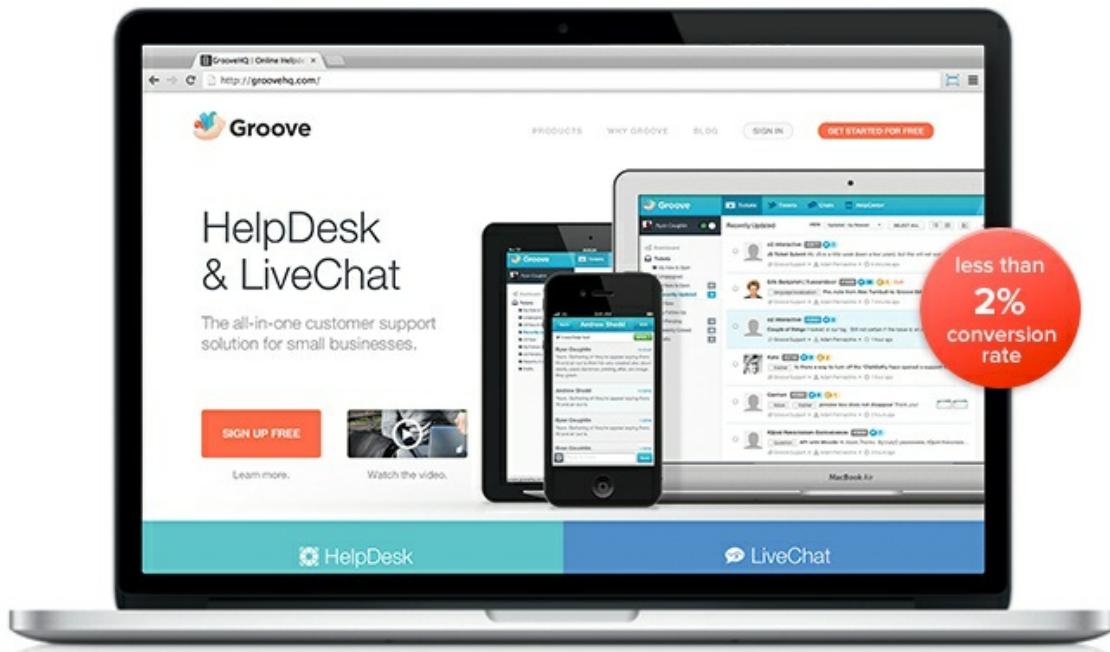
But it wasn’t just the design. We also suffered on the positioning end: because we had two features that we thought were equally valuable, we made the painful error of thinking that we could position ourselves as a “product company” offering a suite of support products, rather than simply a customer support company. Our messaging was scattered and our visitors were confused; nobody was sure what we actually did.

Realizing that if our conversion rate continued to suck this badly, we’d soon have to fold, I had a difficult decision to make. But looking at our metrics and visitor behavior, the only way out of this mess would be to abandon five months of painstaking (and painfully expensive) work.

So we swallowed our pride and put up a three-page (landing, pricing, and signup) site that was hyper-focused on the benefits of our helpdesk platform, and nothing else. No live chat. No ancillary features. The site took three days to build.

Conversions tripled overnight.

Too many messages confused visitors



Simple is Always Better.



Make it happen

Groove was struggling with a brand positioning that did not resonate well with its audience. While the company believed its message to be accurate and attractive, its visitors found it confusing. By testing the performance of two different versions of their landing page, the Groove team was able to pinpoint what was failing in their communications strategy. The next time you measure your landing page for conversion, don't fear failure. Fear myopia.

The effectiveness of brand communications channels to convert must be constantly measured and adjusted to reflect reality. While the strategies that you have designed for your different channels may look great on paper, it takes continuous measurement to optimize their performance.

Are You Ready to Enter a New Channel?

As you prepare to engage your audience using a different communications channel, examine the opportunities and challenges that the new space offers. Analyze what type of conversation is already taking place, as well as the behavior of brands that have already made successful use of the channel.

The following worksheet presents a list of essential questions to help you venture into new communications channels successfully.

You've Decided to Move into a New Channel; Now What?

Tapping into an unknown channel to share your brand story can be challenging. Once you have decided, based on the evidence available to you, that it makes sense to make the move, there are several tactics to ease the transition. The following are some ideas to get you started:

- Launch a giveaway or reward campaign to encourage customers to connect with your brand in this new channel.

- Publish a press release announcing your brand's presence in the new channel.
- Reconfigure all your online and offline links to reflect the existence of the new channel. Think business cards, landing pages, website, social networking sites, and email signature, among others.
- Collaborate with individuals or companies already dominating the channel that you are trying to penetrate. Create a partnership that generates benefits for both brands. For more on brand partnerships, go back to [Chapter 5](#).

NEW CHANNEL READINESS

CHANNEL NAME	
LAUNCH STRATEGIES <i>How did competing brands in this industry launch their presence in this channel?</i>	
ESTIMATED REACH <i>How many viewers/readers/listeners/users does this channel offer?</i>	
MEDIA TYPES <i>What are the possible and preferred media types in this channel? Images, video, text?</i>	
LIMITATIONS <i>What are this channel's main drawbacks? Is there something that you can't do?</i>	
ADVANTAGES <i>What can be done here that can't be done in a different channel?</i>	
FREQUENCY <i>How often are brands expected to share content in this channel?</i>	
SUCCESSFUL BRANDS <i>Name a few of the most successful brands in this channel & their best practices</i>	
COMPETITORS PRESENT <i>Which competing brands will you need to monitor in this channel?</i>	
PARTNERS PRESENT <i>Are any of your partners present in this channel? List those that you will follow.</i>	
ANALYTICS TOOLS <i>Which analytics tools are available to track this channel's performance? Conversion?</i>	
CONVERSION GOALS <i>Which key action/s do you expect users to complete by opening this channel?</i>	
MAIN TOPICS <i>Define the most important topics that you will address using this channel</i>	
RELEVANT METRICS <i>Which metrics are relevant in this channel? Which relate to your conversion goals?</i>	

www.leanbranding.com

Recap

With rechanneling, we are basically switching from one brand communications channel to the next to reflect changing market conditions. Throughout this chapter, we saw three different examples of brands that have leveraged new channels to reach a changing audience.

Though the Disney brand story is essentially the same, its content was adapted to a new channel called “Oh My Disney” to cater to buyer personas that had “grown up.”

With consumers’ behavior changing, J.Crew leveraged Pinterest as a new channel to reach them. In August 2013, J.Crew uploaded its entire *September Style Guide* on a Pinterest board for the first time ever.

After the first two weeks of launching their landing page, the team at Groove looked at analytics data and found out that their conversion rate was less than 2%. When they put up a much simpler three-page landing site, their conversions tripled overnight.

[78] <http://blogs.disney.com/oh-my-disney/>

[79] Mariam Sughayer, “Disney Interactive Takes Next Steps in Social Media with Expanded Blog Network and Oh My Disney Editorial Site,” The Walt Disney Company blog, April 10, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1pewfsX>.

[80] http://www.jcrew.com/help/about_jcrew.jsp

[81] Alex Turnbull, “3 Early Fails That Nearly Killed Our Startup,” Groove blog, October 10, 2013, <http://groovehq.com/blog/early-fails>.

Chapter 10. Brand Reposition

We discussed building a brand story in [Chapter 3](#) and measured how each of this story's elements played in favor of reaching our conversion goals in [Chapter 7](#). This chapter is all about looking at ways to successfully modify this initial story to reflect what is going on in the marketplace once your product is out there. In a way, repositioning is just adjusting your initial position to the space that you've *actually* come to occupy in your customers' eyes.

As I've discussed throughout the book, we live in an era of brand cocreation. We are not singing solo here. As much as we'd like to, there is no way of controlling our brand's real position because it is a result of consumers' perceptions. Nevertheless, we *can* exert some influence by communicating a brand story that *resonates* well with our audience. *Resonance*, the idea that brand messages must connect with consumers' aspirations, was the central topic of [Chapter 7](#). Put simply: your brand's positioning is a result of a negotiation between the message you're sending forth and the way the market interprets that message.

Think about it: a company that sells drinks can invest as many advertising dollars as it wants to position its products as healthy. If a news outlet or competitor comes out with solid research that the drink is not as healthy as previously thought, this brand will be forced to adjust its story to agree with that reality.

Now consider an ecommerce site that starts out positioning itself as the "Earth's Biggest Bookstore." With time, this site starts attracting consumers that are interested in buying items that go well beyond books. Customers start ordering music, movies, apparel, and goods in almost every imaginable category. This ecommerce brand must reposition its story to reflect both changing consumer perceptions and a strategic revenue stream pivot. This ex-

bookstore, now ecommerce empire, is none other than Amazon. Take a few minutes to read the upcoming Lean Branding case study.

Repositioning and the Power of Research

When I was 16, I surveyed 500 students in my high school because I was obsessed with thinking that my school's brand story wasn't being told right. (In retrospect, what is *up* with a teenager performing a full-scale brand audit? I guess some of us *did* say, "I want to be a brand manager when I grow up.")



"*The power of the brand*"—my first brand audit at 16

After surveying 500 kids with a pretty exhaustive list of questions related to everything from school spirit to cafeteria service, I had to find a polite way to say, "Mr. Director (with a ton of years of experience), you've been doing it all wrong."

You know what I found out? That *research* conquers doubt. It aligns everyone around the uncontested. Research is the key to clarity—in startups, enterprises, and life itself.

I've sat down with dozens of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs (a special type of corporate shakers) who find it hard to convince team members and supervisors that something about their brand story is wrong. Let me tell you something: if this argument is based entirely on a personal hunch, you are to blame. Research, on the other hand, is the best way to introduce a brand pivot (or any other kind of pivot, really).

How do we go about finding data to iterate on our brand story? Brand stories are important. They communicate the whole experience that our product or service brings to the marketplace. If you're changing something about them, it better be well informed by real consumer insights. [Chapter 7](#) taught us a few agile ways to measure whether the following brand story elements trigger conversion:

- Positioning
- Promise
- Personas
- Product
- Personality
- Pricing

Aside from knowing how to measure, I've also found that it is useful to look at how others have learned from these types of measurements and repositioned their brand stories to reflect it.

Let's take a look at some brands that have repositioned their stories successfully, following one or more learning lessons arising from continuous measurement and research.

Amazon: From Books to Z

Gone are the days of “Amazon: Earth’s Biggest Bookstore,” but the way this brand’s story has been repositioned to match its revenue streams and buyer needs is well worth learning from.



Amazon.com went live in July 1995. This is what the retailing giant looked like back then.^[82]



Welcome to Amazon.com Books!

*One million titles,
consistently low prices.*

(If you explore just one thing, make it our personal notification service. We think it's very cool!)

SPOTLIGHT! -- AUGUST 16TH

These are the books we love, offered at Amazon.com low prices. The spotlight moves **EVERY** day so please come often.

ONE MILLION TITLES

Search Amazon.com's [million title catalog](#) by author, subject, title, keyword, and more... Or take a look at the [books we recommend](#) in over 20 categories... Check out our [customer reviews](#) and the [award winners](#) from the Hugo and Nebula to the Pulitzer and Nobel... and [bestsellers](#) are 30% off the publishers list...

EYES & EDITORS, A PERSONAL NOTIFICATION SERVICE

Like to know when that book you want comes out in paperback or when your favorite author releases a new title? Eyes, our tireless, automated search agent, will send you mail. Meanwhile, our human editors are busy previewing galleys and reading advance reviews. They can let you know when especially wonderful works are published in particular genres or subject areas. Come in, [meet Eyes](#), and have it all explained.

YOUR ACCOUNT

Check the status of your orders or change the email address and password you have on file with us. Please note that you **do not** need an account to use the store. The first time you place an order, you will be given the opportunity to create an account.

Amazon's original brand promise of "One million titles, consistently low prices" made sense for its business model at the time. The brand's name, selected after the Amazon River in South America, was ideal in more ways than one.

In her book *Jeff Bezos: The Founder of Amazon.com*, Ann Byers describes how the company's CEO settled for the name "Amazon" because it stood for something exotic, different, and large—just like his new venture would be.^[83] (Fun fact: domain names used to appear in online directories sorted by alphabetical order, so Bezos started his search in the A section of the dictionary.)

In fact, Jeff Bezos openly discussed his ideas about the importance of brand names with Inc.com:

There's nothing about our model that can't be copied over time. But you know, McDonald's got copied. And it still built a huge, multibillion-dollar company. A lot of it comes down to the brand name. Brand names are more important on-line than they are in the physical world.^[84]

With time, Amazon's business model shifted in reaction to new consumer needs. Soon, the online retailer started selling almost any imaginable product. In 2014, its catalog includes everything from a tangible piece of art to instantly downloadable digital content. It is evident that the original “Earth’s Biggest Bookstore” tagline or “One million titles, consistently low prices” promise wouldn’t work anymore.

On January 25, 2000, Amazon announced a new brand identity and positioning, “designed to better communicate what customers have come to expect at Amazon.com—a great shopping experience and Earth’s Biggest Selection.”^[85] Notice the careful transition from “Earth’s Biggest Bookstore” to “Earth’s Biggest Selection.” This brand story pivot shows that iteration does not necessarily threaten consistency. The change in positioning was complemented with an identity redesign:

We believe the new logo exudes happiness, is fresh and unique, and has the potential, over time, to join the world’s great consumer marks.

Make it happen

Your brand story may have shifted from the day when you first opened up shop. What was initially a sound positioning strategy may not reflect your current product offering anymore. What used to be compelling brand promise may no longer resonate with your target audience. You have changed, they have changed, and so has everything around you. Whenever your business model pivots into new areas of opportunity, make sure to reposition your brand around it.

As you do so, remember that brand positioning is a result of an ongoing conversation with customers. Take the time to put in place some of the measurement techniques discussed in [Chapter 7](#), and adjust your brand’s positioning accordingly.

A Word on Brand Extensions

You are probably familiar with some successful brand extensions. Think about the time Aunt Jemima jumped from pancakes into maple syrup, or when Colgate decided to start selling toothbrushes in addition to toothpaste. These were logical, market-driven transitions from one space into a new area of opportunity. A brand extension is simply a shift into a new product category that restructures a brand's story in the marketplace.

Brand extensions are a common way for brands to reshape their stories and appeal to an even larger audience. However, as attractive as it may seem, this strategy must be handled with care. To begin with, the move must be informed by a *genuine* market desire to adopt this new product as a “natural” extension of your existing offer. Do consumers feel enticed to purchase this new item when it is branded like other items in your existing product mix? Does it make sense for this brand to move to this space, in this particular market, at this point in time? Will using our brand to represent these new product(s) hurt our existing offer?

There are numerous examples of brand extensions gone wrong. Consider Colgate’s attempt to sell kitchen entrées, or Frito Lay’s failed efforts to sell lemonade. The list goes on: Bic underwear, Cheetos lip balm, Lifesavers soda. Would you consider the fatty, greasy Cheetos sensation something you want on your lips when meeting someone? You may love your sugar, but would you like to chug a whole cup of Lifesaver-y liquid? These assumptions did not translate well for consumers. If there’s something we’ve learned about assumptions throughout this book, it’s that as long as they are not validated, they are risky business.

Granted, a successful brand extension can open new, profitable markets. However, it can also confuse your existing customers to the point of their questioning your entire value offer.

Introducing New Product Features: Means-End Analysis

Sometimes your brand’s story changes because you’ve introduced new product features to satisfy more consumer aspirations. We’ve previously

discussed aspirations: the underlying motives that drive a purchase beyond the product because of where it can take us as consumers.

When introducing new product features, it is always helpful to reevaluate what these underlying benefits are. These reasons are often deep and not accessible to consumers if we were to ask them once. Would you know what were *your* underlying reasons for buying this book, if I asked you just that?

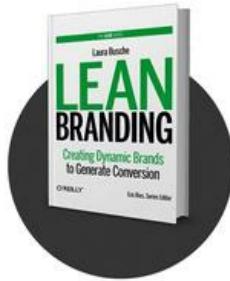
One way to figure out our customers' underlying motives is to conduct a *means-end analysis*.^[86] Though it sounds complicated, the technique is just a series of questions that we ask to dig deep into our customers' core motivations for buying our product. You start with a single product feature and recurringly ask consumers, "What benefit does this offer?" Then, continue to repeat this question until you find the benefit for each subsequent benefit.

Let's go back to your motives for buying this book. What benefits does this book offer to you? Take your answer and drill it down further: what benefits does *that* offer to you? Repeat this exercise four or five times with as many customers as you need to start finding common patterns.^[87] Then use these underlying motives to effectively communicate your brand's new product experience. Thanks to the means-end analysis, you will now be communicating in terms of what *truly* matters to your customers.

RESEARCH
conquers doubt.

It aligns everyone around the
incontestable.

RESEARCH IS
the key to clarity
in startups & life itself.



From Mogulus to Livestream: The Power of a Brand's Name

It was the year 2007 when a live video broadcast site called Mogulus hit the marketplace. Mogulus, a combination of the words *mogul* and *us*, intended to make live video accessible to the rest of us and uphold the brand promise that with this platform “anybody can be a media mogul.”^[88]

By 2008, Mogulus had picked up steam and heavy-handed investments to compete with UStream, Justin TV, and YouTube’s upcoming live video streaming service. The platform allowed anyone with a webcam and an Internet connection to host live video broadcasts. Considering that the word *mogul* means “an important or powerful person, especially in the film or media industry,” the startup’s name made sense. Except it didn’t. It was too abstract for consumers.

The Mogulus team looked into their customer base and found that bloggers, which fit the “anybody can be a mogul” idea, actually lacked the resources and assets to engage in live video. Event organizers, on the other hand, were starting to actively use the platform to stream live broadcasts. CEO Max Haot told Inc.com that when the site started getting traction, he met with his cofounders to find a less abstract, more descriptive name for the product:

I woke up one Saturday and realized: you know what? I don’t want to be the CEO of Mogulus anymore. I want to be the CEO of a brand that is impressing people, and that I think is right. So we took the idea of: OK, it needs to be descriptive.^[89]

After considering a few descriptive names that fit Mogulus’s core value offer, Haot and his cofounders settled for Livestream—which is the site’s name to this day. But securing such a descriptive name wouldn’t come easy.

In 2009, Mogulus paid 100,000 dollars for the Livestream.com domain, and cofounder Max Haot labeled it “the best marketing investment” of his life. TechCrunch titled it “Mogulus Rebrands with a Killer Domain: Livestream.com.”

Make it happen

Is it time for a name change? Just as Livestream emerged from Mogulus, your brand can pivot into a new name as long as the decision is based on customer discovery and not just your gut feeling. Once you have found that your brand’s name is sparking the wrong associations or generating

confusion, make sure to document the reasons for the change and—if possible—create a press release to communicate it. Livestream’s founders were open about their shift, providing pertinent context to justify their decision.

In some cases, crafting a media story out of your brand’s name change can facilitate the transition for existing customers and trigger conversion among new customers.

Repositioning the Smart Way: Strengthening Consumer Learning

Whenever we are trying to introduce new chapters in our brand story, such as a new promise, product experience, positioning, pricing, or personality, there is some teaching that needs to take place. We need to inform consumers that something has changed and do so in a way that sticks. This “knowledge that sticks” is the result of a process known as *consumer learning*.

Hawkins and Mothersbaugh outline a few factors that can make this learning stronger and more effective.^[90] Think about how you can apply each of them to introduce a new brand positioning:

Message involvement

You may have to deal with consumers who are simply not motivated to learn anything new from you. That’s when you get creative. If they’re not motivated by the act of learning, you might still be able to communicate your story with a truly engaging message delivery. Think about the many amusing ads that have made you learn about seemingly unattractive products. Here are some ways to increase message involvement, and stimulate consumer learning:

- Create a viral video explaining the changes.
- Find a celebrity endorser who can capture your audience’s attention.
- Design a creative publicity stunt that helps communicate your brand’s

new direction.

Mood

Some brand messages make us feel happy, and that might just be enough for us to stay around and listen. Has it ever happened to you that a brand’s mood-lifting ad kept you staring longer? There are different tactics that you can use to play up a message’s mood:

- Create inspirational content that motivates your audience to feel better about themselves and the world around them.
- Use humor to associate your new brand message with positive emotions.

Reinforcement

In our case, to *reinforce* is to strengthen a message by providing a positive reward whenever someone “gets it.” The simplest way to think about this is to remember what happened when you learned something new in school. If you were able to show and apply your newly acquired knowledge, teachers rewarded you with all sorts of prizes—a sticker being the all-time standard. Think about your own consumers now: how will *you* reward *them* for learning something new about your brand story? Here are some ideas:

- Create a contest where customers submit images using a new product or feature that your brand has recently launched.
- Stimulate new products or features by providing discounts for early adopters.
- Use your brand’s social media channels to mention and applaud customers who have embraced the brand story changes that you are rolling out.

Repetition

Sometimes we come to assimilate something because it has been repeated to us several times. Making sure that our customers are exposed to a recent change in our brand story more than once is another way to increase the odds that they come to accept this novelty as normal. Stay alert for overexposure: we don't want consumers to reject our message because they have seen it too many times:

- Set up an online ad campaign, making sure that users are exposed to the same message more than once. The number of times that a user is exposed to your ad is called *frequency*.
- Create an explainer video such that the key change being introduced is repeated more than once throughout the script.

Dual coding

Other than repeating the same message in the same channel, you can also try to teach customers an idea using two or more different channels. When consumers are exposed to the information that you are sharing, they must store it in order to learn it. Whenever you share this message using different pathways (images, sounds, and text, among others), learning and memory can increase. This is crucial for business because it will make our brand easier to retrieve and select in the future. These are some strategies that you can use to foster dual coding:

- Share your new brand story using both a blog post and a short video. While the blog post will communicate the message via text, the video relies on visual imagery.
- Place a radio (or online radio) ad that relies on sound and create a simultaneous visual advertising campaign that conveys the same message.

You've Decided to Reshape Your Brand Story; Now What?

It can be overwhelming to try to share a new chapter in your brand story with an audience that is already used to the previous one. In a way, you might feel “out of your element”—and that is exactly what repositioning is about. Changing your brand’s name, promise, positioning, personality, pricing scheme, or product experience can feel a bit like jumping off a cliff. However, as long as your decision is backed by rigorous (yet agile) consumer research, it is time to make the leap and be willing to fix issues along the way.

The following are some ideas to help you introduce these changes:

- Organize contests where customers get a chance to sample this new area of your business.
- Create a tutorial to ease the transition from one product experience to the next. Use graphics, video, text, or a combination of them to facilitate consumer learning.
- Provide an additional customer service line (phone, email, or live chat) to answer specific questions about the recent product experience change.
- Write an explanatory blog post detailing the changes in your pricing policy and how it benefits customers.
- Create a short, engaging video explaining your new brand promise and how it impacts your customers’ experience with the product or service. In particular, focus on how this new brand promise connects to your audience’s aspirations. For more information about producing this video, revisit [Chapter 5](#).
- If you’ve decided to change your brand’s name, make sure that you roll out the new identity across all communication channels. Every brand name change is followed by a visual identity change; therefore, [Chapter 11](#) will provide more ideas for sharing these kinds of changes effectively.

Recap

This chapter discussed how we can pivot our brand story in response to changing market realities. Brand stories communicate the whole experience that our product or service brings to the marketplace. Therefore, if you’re changing something about them, it better be well informed by real consumer insights. Research conquers doubt. It aligns everyone around the incontestable. It is the key to clarity—in startups, enterprises, and life itself.

To understand the value of continuous measurement to build dynamic brand stories, this chapter introduced the cases of Livestream and Amazon.

On January 25, 2000, Amazon announced a new brand identity and positioning, “designed to better communicate what customers have come to expect at Amazon.com—a great shopping experience and Earth’s Biggest Selection.” Amazon carefully transitioned from “Earth’s Biggest Bookstore” to “Earth’s Biggest Selection.” This brand story pivot shows that iteration does not necessarily threaten consistency.

The Mogulus team looked into its customer base and found that bloggers, which fit the “anybody can be a mogul” idea, actually lacked the resources and assets to engage in live video. After considering a few descriptive names that fit their core value offer, Max Haot and his cofounders settled for Livestream, which is the site’s name to this day.



[82] <http://g-images.amazon.com/images/G/01/banners/upf/amzn-original-gateway.gif>

[83] Ann Byers, *Jeff Bezos: The Founder of Amazon.com* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2006), 46.

[84] Jeffrey L. Seglin, “Hot Strategy: ‘Be Unprofitable for a Long Time,’” Inc.com, September 1, 1997, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/19970901/1314.html>.

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Chapter 11. Brand Redesign

Brands get haircuts. As with people, sometimes these makeovers are a hit and sometimes a miss. Sometimes they’re uncalled for, like shaving your beard or cutting your hair in the dead of winter. In many cases, failure can be prevented when we inform our redesign decisions with data from real customers (as we learned in [Chapter 8](#)). Warning: sometimes failure is inevitable and sticks around like a really bad haircut. That’s when you repeat this to yourself:

Sometimes you win. Sometimes you lose learn.

This book isn’t here to make you look pretty, though you probably will.

—John C. Maxwell

When I was in business school, I would run frantically from a Managerial Accounting final to a Typography 101 critique—portfolio in hand and everything. I faced people from all walks of business who fully disregarded design (though they were *completely* influenced by it). I also met fine artists who drowned in their own work and the dense creative universe in their minds.

Then I met designers. And instantly fell in love. Let me tell you why.

Designers are familiar with critiques. They not only tolerate them but *actively* look out for them. They honestly believe in iterations and learn to edit down their work. They embrace simplicity and create beauty based on requirements other than their own. Design education teaches you to run away from assumptions and to have the stomach to scrap your work often.

I’m bringing this up because it’s time to bridge the gap between design and business. In fact, my goal with *Lean Branding* is to align everyone in your company around your brand’s success.

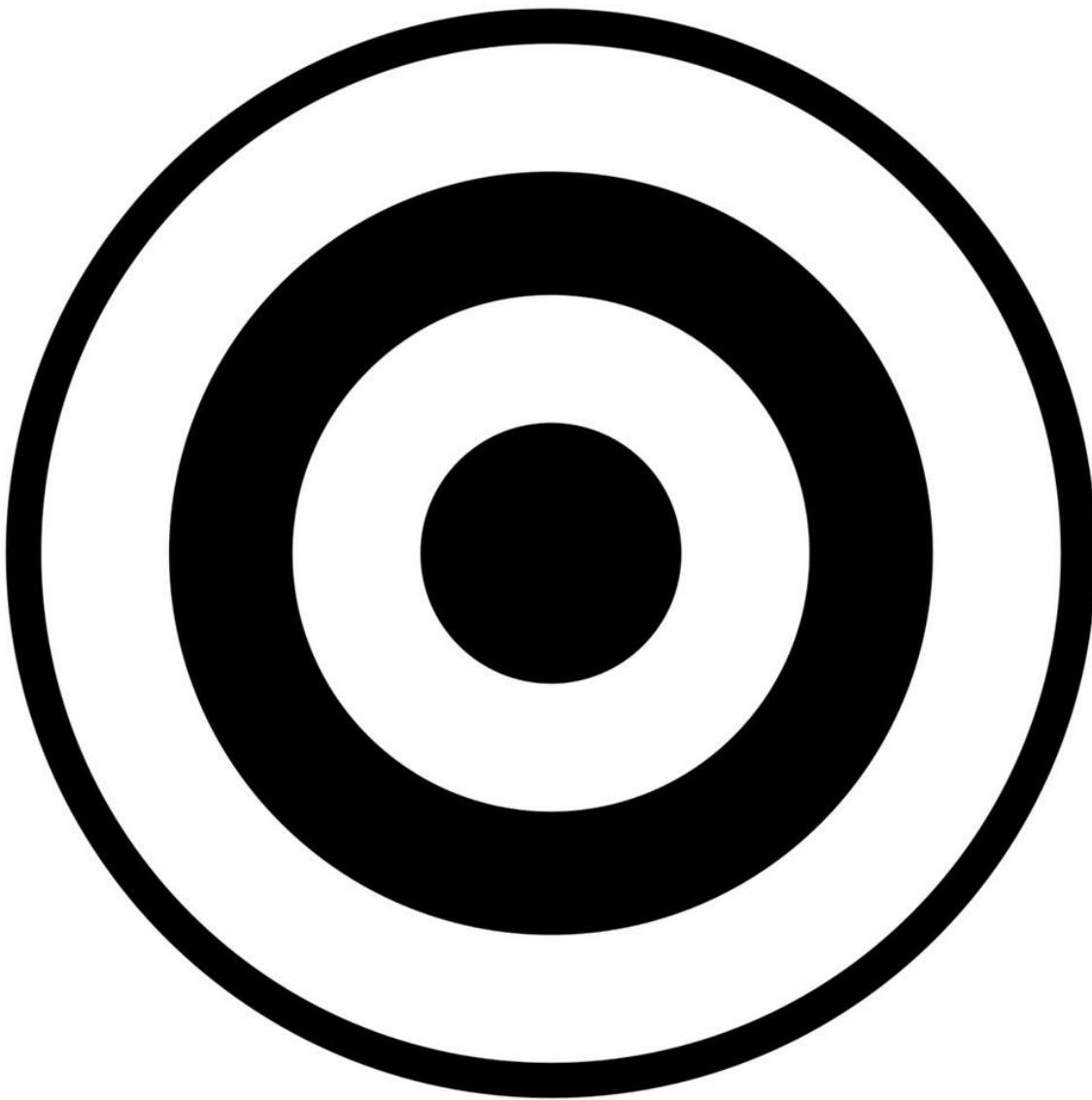
This chapter takes what you’ve learned thus far a step further so that you gain

the stomach to scrap what needs to go and the brains to identify what needs to stay. We'll talk about the tradeoffs involved in redesigning a brand's visual identity and review some examples of companies that have done it successfully. The next pages will show you how to leverage the understanding of visual symbols that we discussed in [Chapter 4](#) as well as the testing know-how in [Chapter 8](#).

Consistency: The Opportunity Cost

I've discussed the importance of consistency before. It is imperative that you make *any* brand pivot as frictionless as possible for customers, and even more so when it comes down to visual symbols. Every brand asset that you have displayed in the past (think about your logo, imagery, color palette, and typography) has formed meaningful associations in consumers' minds.

In some cases, these visual symbols become so engrained that we immediately associate generic symbols with the specific brands that use them. Which brands are you reminded of when you see the following symbols?



You recalled these brands without even adding color or typography to the mix. The associations that just became evident to you are the reason why consistency is such an important consideration in brand redesign. When faced with the possibility of modifying your brand's symbols, reflect on the following:

Is the cost of modifying our visual symbols higher than the benefit of introducing a new visual brand identity?

If the answer is yes, hold your horses—it may not be the right time for a makeover. If the answer is no, and the benefit of going forward with this is

much larger than the cost, *what are you waiting for?* If the answer is, “I have no idea how to figure this out,” stay with me.

Your research (back from [Chapter 8](#)) shows that something in your brand’s visual identity is off. Deciding whether it’s the right time to fix it will require weighing costs and benefits.

Common Costs of Pivoting Visual Brand Identity

Consider the negative impact of redesigning your brand’s visual symbols. In doing so, include both direct and indirect costs in your analysis. Would implementing a brand redesign demand a budget that you do not have access to? Would launching a new logo confuse customers to the point of losing sales?

Here are some common costs that you can refer to in your analysis:

- Cost of rolling out new visual assets across every channel
- Cost of losing existing customers due to the change
- Cost of losing potential customers due to the change
- Cost of losing brand partners due to the change

Common Benefits of Pivoting Visual Brand Identity

Now consider the positive impact of redesigning your brand’s visual symbols. These benefits must outweigh the costs to make the redesign project worthwhile. Would you be able to resonate with an attractive demographic with new brand imagery? Would changing your brand’s typographic scheme or color palette improve the user’s experience with the product? Would a new logo design facilitate purchase or increase interest in your brand’s offerings?

Here are some common benefits that you can refer to in your analysis:

- Benefit associated with gaining new customers due to the change
- Benefit associated with engaging in new partnerships due to the change
- Benefit associated with gaining renewed media exposure due to the change
- Benefit associated with introducing an entirely new user experience that requires the visual identity change

When Pivoting Visual Brand Identity Is a No-Brainer

Sometimes the decision is much easier to make. There are external circumstances that demand engaging in a brand redesign project. Such circumstances include strategic business pivots that leave no other choice but to alter the brand's visual identity to reflect new corporate realities.

Here are some common examples of these circumstances:

- Your brand was acquired by a larger “umbrella” brand and needs to reflect that ASAP.
- You are unifying several subbrands under a single visual system because it is currently creating confusion.
- You are entering a new market that speaks a different language and need your logo to change as a result of a brand name translation.
- Your visual brand identity is 20 years old and still has a combination of 3D effects, shadows, and gradients. (I've seen younger brands that look like this, too.)

Let's take a look at some successful brand redesigns to learn how our own brands can benefit from a visual makeover of any size.

**MY GOAL WITH
LEAN BRANDING**
is to align everyone
in your company
*around your
brand's success.*



Mall of America: The Role of Color

The following text appeared in Mall of America's blog on May 28, 2013:

*Always fresh. Always exciting. **Always new.** You may have noticed an exciting splash of color on all things Mall of America® this week. Go ahead and take a closer look, you're seeing our brand new logo!*^[91]



Mall of America (MOA), one of the largest shopping malls in the United States, first opened its doors in 1992. The average visitor's experience, however, goes far beyond shopping: the mall hosts more than 400 events every year.^[92] We are talking more than 35 million visitors, 400 stores, and one of the top tourist destinations in the country. It's fair to say that this is no ordinary mall.



With such dynamism and success, it is hard to believe that MOA's visual

brand identity went unchanged for 20 years. Bringing in design firm Duffy & Partners, it launched an entirely new image on May 15, 2013.

This is how Duffy explained the brand's successful redesign:

The solution required a brand language that was dynamic enough to embrace the diversity of the mall's offerings—from world-class fashion, to a smorgasbord of dining experiences, from amusement parks, to marquis events, and more. The design—at once bold, iconic, and true to its unmistakably American heritage—is punctuated by the tagline “Always New.”^[93]

Keeping MOA's renowned star and ribbon symbols, while transforming them, was the key to preserving consistency while moving forward with a much-needed iteration.

Make it happen

Have your measurements revealed that your brand's visual symbols need a makeover? Consider which elements of your existing visual identity have formed enduring associations among customers. Think about your brand's key symbols, and make a list of the items that should be preserved to help maintain consistency while introducing novelty.

As you introduce a new identity, make sure to roll out the fresh visual system across all of your brand's assets.

AOL Inc. and Dynamic Brand Identities

AOL Inc., which used to be known as America Online, was founded in 1983. What was initially an online video company went on to become a software suite to access the Internet, and as of 2014 it has shifted its business model to mass media distribution.

AOL's corporate history is long and eventful, but one episode stands out. In January 2000, when most of the world was celebrating the beginning of a new millennium, Time Warner and AOL announced that they would merge. At the cusp of its web empire, America Online had paid \$165 billion for a traditional media company.^[94] Times were definitely changing.

But it was only when this merger broke up, in December 2009, that AOL decided to engage in a much-needed brand identity refresh—one that

undoubtedly changed the rules of the logo design game.

The new visual identity was actually hinted at before the split. It was November 22 when the company submitted a press release titled “AOL Previews New Brand Identity for Its Future as an Independent Content-Driven Company.”^[95] That December, the world met the new AOL.^[96]



Wait. Has AOL just created the first completely user-contributed, 100% flexible, invisible logo? Where all that matters is what animates around it?^[97]

—Fast Company

Yes, it did. And by doing so, AOL contributed to what we now know as *dynamic branding*: the idea that a brand’s visual identity can combine static, permanent components and an ever-evolving set of design elements surrounding them.

The media giant was dragging on a long history of hits and misses that the new generations were no longer acquainted with. AOL needed a new identity that introduced its products as “Hi, nice to meet you” rather than “Hey. We’re AOL.”

This is how Wolff Olins, the design firm in charge of the project, described it:

We worked with AOL to build an innovative new brand platform for their business. This platform is deliberately disruptive. The reason is simple; the media world today is entirely unlike the media world of yesterday.

Read more about this case at <http://www.wolffolins.com/work/aol>.

Make it happen

With *dynamic branding*, consistency relies on a few graphic basic elements or rules, and there is more room for creative freedom and adaptations. This type of visual system works best with brands that face radically different audiences, interact in diverse contexts, and speak to a wide array of interests and aspirations.

If your measurements from [Chapter 8](#) revealed the need to consider a dynamic brand identity, ask yourself the following questions: how would your brand look if its visual symbols were dynamic? Which graphic elements would remain steady and which would evolve depending on the occasion?

The Innovation Warehouse and the Value of Iterating Gradually

The Innovation Warehouse is a startup accelerator and angel investor network based in London. When it opened, the Innovation Warehouse was one of the only startup accelerators in London, but by 2013 the market had become extremely competitive and membership was falling. The previous brand did not adequately represent the full range of startup capital and investment services that the accelerator offered to members.

In 2013, digital brand strategist Peter Thompson joined the team and implemented a series of measurements to rebrand the Innovation Warehouse.

One of the changes involved a brand visual identity redesign. The Innovation Warehouse was often referred to as “the IW” on its website and social media. Customer research found that the target audience of new entrepreneurs did not know the organization by its initials, so the name wasn’t resonating well. The team used search engine data to test the hypothesis that using the full name would be better for gaining traction. The symbols (logo and corporate identity) were incrementally improved to drop the initials and focus on the full name.

Since the brand has gone live, the number of membership inquiries has

increased and the accelerator has had to add new capacity to allow for expansion. The angel network has also been able to make new investments and raise additional capital for investing into startups.



Make it happen

It is often the case that rolling out visual brand identity changes across the board takes an overwhelming amount of time, money, and resources. What if you could “pilot” the shifts with a smaller audience to make sure that the larger investment is worthwhile? Introduce gradual visual symbol pivots with a small group of customers. How do they react to these prototypes? Is the confusion or inaccuracy that you were targeting effectively solved by the new visual identity? If it is, continue rolling out the changes.

You've Decided to Redesign Your Brand Symbols; Now What?

Makeovers can be stressful. On top of having to adapt to your brand's new

appearance, you must make sure that all your audiences are aware of the change. Reducing confusion and misperceptions is essential. Sitting down or hiring someone to sit down and complete the design work is only half of the story. Moving on to a clearer, stronger set of brand symbols is great news, but it will go completely unnoticed unless you communicate it as effectively as you built it. Therefore, pulling off an effective brand redesign is largely a matter of execution:

- How will the consumer interact with these new symbols? Where and how will they become visible (potential applications)?
- If they reflect a change in your brand story, how will you tell the new one?
- Why should the consumer *care* about these new symbols? How are they related to that consumer's *aspirations*?

The following are some ideas for introducing your new brand redesign:

- Write a blog post explaining the motivations and process behind the visual change.
- Create a video showing the evolution and how it impacts the value that you are creating for the viewer (customer).
- Organize a release event to share the news with partners, customers, and/or friends. This event could be in the form of a reception, academic conference, or party.
- Launch a promotion related to your new visual brand identity to expand the reach of this piece of news.
- Ensure that everyone on your team and the outside community (press, investors, researchers) has access to your newly redesigned brand symbols, as well as a guide on how to use them properly. This will accelerate the adoption of these assets across the board.

Recap

It is imperative that you make *any* brand pivot as frictionless as possible for customers, and even more so when it comes down to visual symbols.

Chapter 11 introduced advice and examples related to implementing these types of iterations. If your research shows that something in your brand's visual identity is off, deciding whether it's the right time to fix it will require weighing costs and benefits. *Is the cost of modifying our visual symbols higher than the benefit of introducing a new visual brand identity?*

The three companies introduced in this chapter found effective ways to pivot their brand's visual identity to reflect changing market realities.

Mall of America's visual brand identity went unchanged for 20 years.

Bringing in design firm Duffy & Partners, MOA launched an entirely new image on May 15, 2013. Keeping its renowned star and ribbon symbols, while transforming them, was the key to preserving consistency while moving forward with a much-needed iteration.

With dynamic branding—such as the one AOL implemented—consistency relies on a few graphic basic elements or rules and there is more room for creative freedom and adaptations.

Customer research found that the target audience of the Innovation Warehouse did not know the organization by its initials, so the name wasn't resonating well. The brand's visual symbols (logo and corporate identity) were incrementally improved to drop the initials and focus on the full name.

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Chapter 12. Conclusion

What are your customers' first thoughts when they think about you? This can be a pretty scary question to think about. Throughout this book, you learned how to build, measure, and pivot your brand's value creation story, visual *symbols*, and growth *strategy* according to their effectiveness at generating conversion.

Why would you put yourself at a disadvantage? Your largest competitors are building brands and harnessing their power to acquire and activate *your* potential customers. My goal with *Lean Branding* is to open your eyes and those of your team members to the essential ingredients of a high-conversion brand—hoping that you will align around the creation, measurement, and iteration of these ingredients to maximize growth.

In **Part I**, Build, we discussed how to create a minimally viable brand experience in the marketplace by starting out with 25 ingredients of a brand's story, symbols, and strategy. You learned about the importance of consumer aspirations in this process: how they must be embedded in your value creation story to provide your customers a shortcut to self-realization.

You also learned how to convey this story with visual brand symbols that leverage existing mental associations to connect your brand with a given set of values and goals. Lastly, you saw how brand communication channels provide effective outlets to show your story, harness the power of your visual symbols, and boost conversion. Throughout the section, you were also introduced to the importance of ethnographic research in building an initial set of brand ingredients.

In **Part II**: Measure, you learned how truly dynamic, high-conversion brands arise from continuous measurement and testing your assumptions. In this sense, you saw how to *validate* hypotheses related to the story, symbols, and strategy built in the previous section. You also learned how to record the

outcomes of these tests using a Brand Learning Log to facilitate the process. This section provided a series of techniques to test your 25 brand ingredients over time. You discovered how to measure whether your strategy is generating *traction*; your story, *resonance*; and your symbols, a fitting *identity* in support of the first two.

Finally, **Part III: Learn** introduced the brand pivots necessary to make sure that you can respond well to the market's changing realities. You saw how companies iterated on their brand's value creation story by *repositioning* their message to match shifting customer perceptions and needs. **Chapter 9**, on *rechanneling*, showed you how other brands have switched from one communication channel to the next in response to their target audience's fledgling media preferences. In **Chapter 11**, you saw how visual symbols could be *redesigned* to generate the right associations with your brand over time.

We're nowhere near done here. The Lean Branding process is ongoing, evidence-based, and customer-centered. Because both customers and evidence change continuously, your job is alive as long as your brand is.

It is my hope that this book has provided the structure and tools to help you create a distinct message for your brand (story), a set of assets to represent that message sensorially (symbols), and the channels to communicate it with the goal of generating conversion (strategy).

Appendix A. Glossary

A/B testing

A type of experiment that rolls out a different version of the component that you are trying to test to different groups. By comparing the performance of two versions of a single element, A/B testing helps validate a specific hypothesis. Also known as *split testing*.

App store optimization

A strategy that consists in optimizing the site where your app is sold in order to facilitate the sale or download.

Backlinks

Incoming links that point to a section of your brand's site.

Brand

A brand is the *unique story* that consumers recall when they think of you. This story associates your product with their *personal* stories, a particular *personality*, what you *promise* to solve, and your *position* in relation to competitors. Your brand is represented by your visual *symbols* and feeds from multiple conversations where you must participate *strategically*.

Brand collateral

The material that we use to communicate our brand's message to a determined audience (e.g., press, potential customers, and investors).

Brand friction

The resistance to changing brand symbols, stories, and strategies fearing that they may reflect confusion or inconsistency or otherwise hurt consumer perception.

Brand imagery

A selection of images that represent and help explain the brand's story in the marketplace. Brand imagery elucidates and exemplifies the product, positioning, pricing, personality, and promise that the brand offers to a specific set of buyer personas.

Brand Journey Maps

Types of customer journey maps that display the complete adventure that customers engage with as they consume your product or service. The maps display different stages with strategic *touchpoints*, which are spots where your brand can add value for the customer. Brand Journey Maps help us recognize what these stages and touchpoints look like to design an effective response. These maps visualize your product experience in terms of all the brand elements that must come together when someone consumes your offer.

Brand personality

Humane psychological qualities associated with our brand that dictate its interactions in the marketplace during different situations and over time.

Brand positioning

Finding and taking a space within the marketplace that projects your brand as the “aspiration enabler” for a certain customer segment. In other words, positioning is finding the right parking space inside the consumer’s mind and going for it before someone else takes it.

Brand promise

A memorable, short phrase that encapsulates your brand's core value

offer.

Brand rechanneling

Switching from one brand communications channel to the next. Unless done in conjunction with a brand redesign or repositioning, rechanneling does not imply changing the essence of a brand's story or visual symbols. Instead, it deals with changing the way in which we approach any of the existing communications channels to strengthen conversion.

Brand redesigning

Modifying the symbols that constitute a brand's visual identity in response to changes in the marketplace or your business model.

Brand repositioning

Adjusting the brand's initial story to reflect changes in the marketplace or your business model.

Brand resonance

When your brand story fits with your market's expectations, aspirations, and demands. Resonance happens when customers pulsate in response to your message, becoming involved with your value offer because it feels *relevant* to their needs.

Brand traction

An indicator of the market's reaction to your brand. In words credited to investor Naval Ravikant, “Traction is quantitative evidence of market demand.”

Brand typography

A set of type arrangements and selections that identify the brand's story in the marketplace.

Brand wall

A vertical or horizontal surface on which ideas, data, and works in progress related to your brand can be displayed, rearranged, and extended.

Buyer personas

Archetypes or models that we build to represent our customers in order to inspire everything our brand is, does, and communicates. These personas are *fictional* characters based on *real* needs and aspirations discovered through consumer research.

Call to action

A clear, unambiguous invitation to engage in a certain conversion act. This act is defined differently by each brand and may range from a straightforward newsletter subscription to a thorough product purchase process.

Conversion

The act of leading customers down a desired action path. Customers *convert* when they have successfully completed this path. Conversion is often defined differently based on the industry and business model that you've decided to pursue.

Conversion pixel

A piece of code that can be inserted within online elements like ads, emails, sites, buttons, and shopping carts to track whether users have completed a specific conversion path.

Fly on the wall

A research technique where you become part of a given scenery for a defined period of time to observe and take note of existing behaviors,

environments, and objects. This helps us understand our buyer's context and unveil valuable insights to address his needs effectively.

In-depth interviews

Extensive one-on-one sessions with potential or existing customers to discover underlying motivations, lifestyles, and preferences that may inform brand development.

Landing page

A site where your prospective buyers first “land” to know about your brand. Landing pages also attract a wide array of visitors with different interests, such as reporters, potential investors, and partners, among others. They are different from traditional websites in that their main objective is to generate a specific type of conversion rather than providing all available information about a brand or company.

Logo

A visual symbol used by brands to identify their story in the marketplace.

Point-of-purchase optimization

A strategy that consists of designing the space where your product is sold in order to facilitate the sale.

Pressroom

An online environment where reporters and other interested parties can find statistics, testimonials, partnerships, news, evidence of traction, and other relevant information about your brand.

Psychographic characteristics

Traits that go beyond a consumer's demographic qualities (age and gender, among others) and into an analysis of psychological criteria like

their attitudes, lifestyle, personality, and aspirations.

Search engine optimization (SEO)

Designing and referencing our online content so that search engines can find and place our brand properly. Ideally, search engines should point to the different channels that compose our online presence whenever users' queries are related to the problem that we are trying to solve.

Secondary research

Existing information that we analyze to discover insights that may guide our branding work.

Sensory branding

The practice of using sensorial stimuli to build lasting associations with your brand.

Shadowing

A research technique where you follow a given subject's journey for a defined amount of time to discover insights in her routine. We use these insights to inform brand development.

Shortened URLs

A feature that shrinks long links to facilitate sharing on social networking sites.

Sitemap

A clear scheme that reveals a list of pages within your brand's website that are accessible to crawlers and users themselves. They give a sense of your site's inner organization.

Social learning theory

A concept in social psychology suggesting that “most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example” (Bandura, 1977).

Social media marketing

The practice of using social networking sites as strategic business communication channels to generate brand conversion.

Split testing

See *A/B testing*.

Symbolic consumption

Products and services convey symbolic meaning well beyond their functional features. Consumers may engage in the purchase process in response to the meanings that they ascribe to certain brands.

Symbolic interactionism

A concept in social psychology that explains how humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings that they assign to those things. Since humans are permanently interacting with symbols and defining them, brands can use existing layers of meaning to associate products and services with specific values and aspirations via visual symbols.

Thought leadership

A strategy whereby a brand is presented as an expert in its customers’ main area of interest or need to generate trust and conversion.

Value opportunity analysis

A technique to measure consumers’ perception about the product experience (journey) that we have created for them. Consumers rate different values added by our product or service on a scale of low,

medium, and high. Value opportunity analysis helps us visualize where our product journey is lacking and where it is fulfilling expectations. By showing us weak areas, this tool enables new opportunities for our brand to add value along the entire product journey.

Appendix B. Credits and References

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About the Author

Laura has been implementing The Lean Startup methodology with more than 150 entrepreneurs and their 50+ internet-based startups. She has learned about what makes and breaks them, what they fear as they create their brand, and how it can be fixed. This experience has allowed her to grasp first-hand what it takes to improve every component of their brand strategy from logo design to demo day pitches. Being a digital marketing mentor for Colombia's IT Ministry and its Apps.co program, based entirely on The Lean Startup and the Business Model Canvas, has given her a unique insight to approach brand building for internet-based startups. She completed my business degree at the Kogod School of Business in Washington D.C. (Summa Cum Laude in Business Administration. Concentration: International Marketing), and she is currently completing her PhD dissertation in Consumer Psychology. Junior Chamber International (UN program) recognized her as one of the Top Outstanding Young Persons in Colombia in 2012, and the World Economic Forum invited her to belong to their Global Shapers community of young people changing the world in 2013. She has grown passionate about digital marketing from working at Groupon, National Geographic and creating her own agency (www.ozonegroup.co). The Lean Startup inspired her to become a marketing mentor for several cohorts of Colombian entrepreneurs.

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