





Why Take the Trip?

The journey is the reward.

— TAOIST SAYING

In a nutshell, the leader's task is to align people to deliver value. This book is about just that: leadership that focuses every employee's actions on delivering your organisation's brand promise. But isn't branding solely a marketing function? No, the biggest myth in business today is that branding is just about marketing. If the marketing department is making promises to your customers, who is responsible for making sure that promise is delivered? Company leaders. And the way to deliver on your organisation's promise is through integrated branding.

Integrated branding is a leadership practice that aligns *all* actions and messages with the core value an organisation brings to its line of business. With integrated branding, a company carefully orchestrates everything it does to deliver a highly differentiated and consistent, positive experience. You could say integrated branding is the promise that you keep.

The goal of your integrated branding promise is to create unbreakable customer relationships through compelling customer experiences. Because a company's brand is the sum of a customer's experience with it and based on what the company does well, delivering on that brand becomes every leader's responsibility. When this responsibility is met, the result is a consistent customer experience with a positive bottom line impact.

According to B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, products and services act as the stage for a memorable customer experience. And branded experiences are critical to creating a bond with customers: 'While prior economic offerings — commodities, goods and services — are external to the buyer, experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual or even spiritual level'.¹

By integrating everything from broad processes to employee actions in the service of building an integrated brand, a company is many times more likely to create deep, long lasting relationships with its best customers.

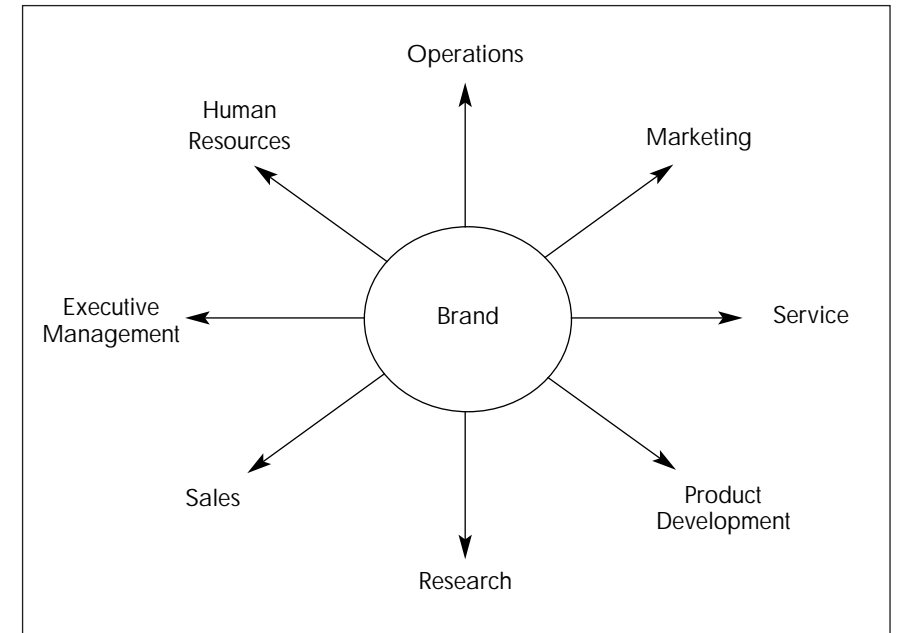
Contrary to some schools of thought, employee branding cannot be a separate activity if companies are going to walk their talk. Employees need to be taking action based on building a company's overall brand, in order for the company to realize the full benefits of brand integration. 'if we want to exceed the trust of our customers, then we first have to build trust with our people,' says Howard Schultz, Starbucks' chairman. Brand has to start with the culture and naturally extend to our customers'.²

Take the example of a retail-clothing brand. In a truly integrated brand, a customer experiences everything about a clothing store as a seamless experience, including its logo, its ads, its retail environment, its salespeople, its Web site, its customer service, its gift box and, of course, its clothes. Even things that happen behind the scenes — such as how a company manages inventory and order fulfillment — can contribute to the customer's experience. WalMart, for example, knows that the greeter at the door is as much a part of the brand as the logo. Strong brands are those that align all their activities to deliver on a compelling customer experience.

Just the opposite is true, also. Take, for example, the discount store that promises the lowest prices, but the cash register the checker uses cannot ring up a competitor's discount without having a manager's key to override the program. The checkers hesitate to involve the manager in customer transactions for fear they will be perceived as not doing their job competently. The customer, who found the competitor's discount, and expects to get it quickly, doesn't like waiting for the manager. The company has just failed to deliver on its brand experience for this customer. Without an understanding of how a brand must permeate the organisation, down to supplying the necessary tools at a checkout counter, a company cannot deliver the expected customer experience.

FIGURE 1.1 **The Truly Integrated Brand**

The company brand is at the center of all actions and functions.



You might think that when **Federal Express** officially shortened its name to FedEx, it was solely the look and feel of the new company image that built it into the mega-brand it is today. While brand conveyors, such as a company's logo or colors, play an important role in public image and awareness, it would be a mistake to think that FedEx was able to grow from its humble roots in 1973 into the shipping giant it is today by just having the right 'look and feel'. FedEx's success is based on keeping promises. Shortly after FedEx began making promises about its revolutionary new business model, Xerox Corporation tested FedEx's system by shipping empty boxes for two weeks before entrusting the company with real documents. There isn't a 'look and feel' in existence that can help a company pass a test like that.

So why does branding usually live in the marketing department? Because many leaders are fundamentally confused about what branding is or is not. They think it's only a marketing or corporate identity function,

rather than something that **lives in every experience every customer has with the company**. Wise leaders know unless they are communicating the truth, all their marketing efforts will come up short. Customers know when companies are not walking the talk. Employees know even quicker. When a company is paying lip service to a concept, rather than living it, employees are less loyal to and productive for that company. As J. Marriot Jr. of the **Marriot** hotel chain says about employees, 'Motivate them, train them, care about them and make winners out of them. . . we know that if we treat our employees correctly, they'll treat the customers right. And if customers are treated right, they'll come back.'

Integrated branding is the path to training every employee how to treat the customer right. To work, it must be the seed within the company that blooms in every department, creating a consistent customer experience. **And good leaders will make guiding people on how to live the brand one of their chief aims.** If your company has integrated its brand, every person knows and takes actions based on what the company is great at, its personality and its key promise to customers. Furthermore, they know how their job function directly or indirectly creates the customer's experience. When employees are living an integrated brand, they can:

- make decisions smarter and faster;
- consistently act in a way that customers appreciate;
- design products and services that emphasize the company's key promise;
- consistently act to increase the company's differentiation;
- hire the type of people and create a work environment that reflects the company's key values;
- budget the company's money in a way that builds the brand and reinforces key brand attributes.

And yes, they also will market the company's products and services in a way that reinforces the company's brand.

Do all companies need to live their integrated brand? In a word, yes. Yes, if they care about attracting and retaining loyal customers and employees. Yes, if they care about returning value to shareholders. And, yes, if they care about maximizing the company's investments and expenditures. You don't need to be a multimillion-dollar company with an astronomical marketing budget to reap the internal and external rewards of an

integrated brand. You simply need the clarity of vision to understand the importance your customers' experience plays in your future success.

THE SECRET TO CREATING LOYAL CUSTOMERS

As we said, the goal of the integrated branding process is to create unbreakable customer relationships, compared to just gaining people's awareness, as the dotcoms did during the 2001 Super Bowl. You want customers ultimately bonded to your company in many deep ways, like a Starbucks experience, where it's not just the coffee taste, but how Starbucks grows it, what music you listen to while drinking it, the sense of place Starbucks creates and how well coffee servers know their stuff.

Figure 1.2 shows the progression of the customer experience using integrated branding: from awareness through preference to loyalty, and then on to commitment. How can having more loyal and committed customers help your company? Frederick F. Reichheld, author of *The Loyalty Effect: The Hidden Force behind Growth, Profits and Lasting Value*, has demonstrated that bringing just 5% more of your customers into the loyalty or commitment levels would lead to an average 25% to 100% increase in profit per customer.³

But loyalty and commitment won't result from increased awareness, great advertising or even customer willingness to sign on to 'loyalty programs'. According to a Gallup study of a major hotel chain's affinity club, members who were strongly attached to the brand gave the chain 32% more of their total lodging dollars — even though other club members received the same perks and benefits from the club.⁴

What can leaders do to create loyalty? There are several ways that you can use integrated branding to move your customers to loyalty and commitment. In the article 'Brand Zealots' by Horacio D. Rozanski, Allen G. Baum and Bradley T. Wolfson in *Strategy + Business*, the authors cite work by Professor Susan Fournier of Harvard University, who has outlined three **triggers** to create an emotional tie with a brand:

1. Congruence with deeply rooted life themes [values], such as personal freedom
2. Helping in the accomplishment of life projects such as college graduation or parenting
3. Resolution of current concerns, such as getting enough vitamins

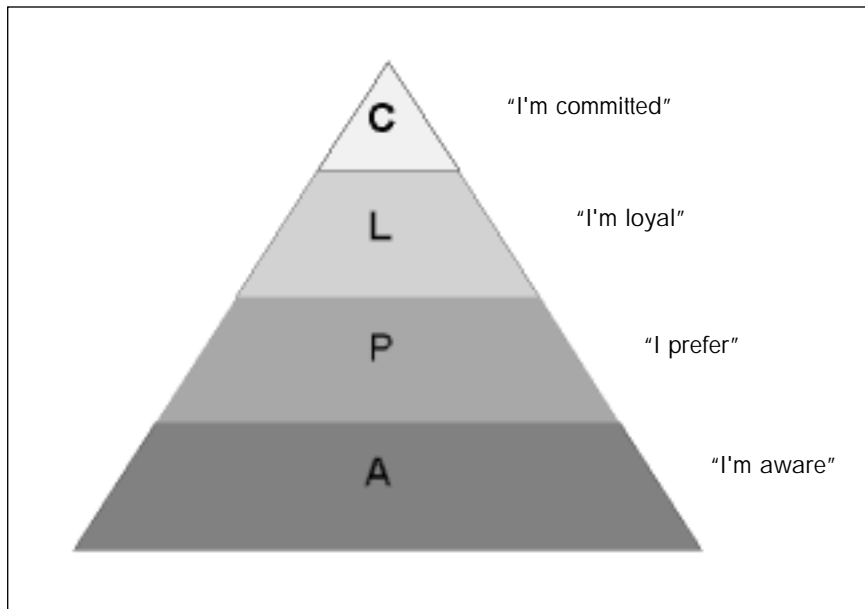
According to Fournier, all three triggers can occur either through the customer's **personal relationship with the brand** — resulting in the customer seeing the brand as a friend or partner, or through **a community of users** — where the community becomes a significant part of the customer's life.

When these triggers result in either high levels of satisfaction or significant personal investment in the brand (either of emotions, time or money), customer loyalty increases. These customers will remain loyal, be vocal about your brand, and help your brand overcome any missteps.⁵ In fact, companies that overcome missteps generate greater customer loyalty than those that never make a mistake. 'Southwest Airlines customers, for example, say the airline effectively deals with problems in 77% of cases, compared with less than 50% for the four largest carriers. As a result, nearly half of those who say they are loyal to an airline identify Southwest as their favorite.'⁶

When customers understand and buy into the value of the experience employees create, they also develop a rationale for why they prefer

FIGURE 1.2 **Brand Equity Pyramid**

Moving up the pyramid creates an unbreakable customer relationship.



your product or service and company. The combination of intellectual and emotional identification with your brand can move customers past loyalty to the commitment level where they often become customers for life. **Harley-Davidson**, for example, is known for the fanaticism of its customers. The company is not just selling motorcycles, but as stated in its mission, it is fulfilling 'dreams through the experience of motorcycling'. To that end, Harley-Davidson has created a community of highly committed users — there are 660,000 enthusiasts from 115 countries who pay U.S. \$40 annually to be members of the Harley Owner's Group (H.O.G.), to share in the experiences of motorcycling and be part of the Harley-Davidson family. The company also connects with its customers and creates an emotional bond in a myriad of other ways: open houses, cause-related rides, apparel and collectibles, parts and accessories to customize your motorcycle, Rider's Edge (the Harley Davidson Academy of Motorcycling), *The Enthusiast* magazine, and H.O.G rallies worldwide.

The benefits of creating a strong brand also extend to increased profits. Companies with strong brands have measurable results:

- 5–7% higher stock price than others;⁸
- customers who are willing to pay up to 25% more than other brands for the same features/functions;⁹
- up to 289% earnings (before interest and taxes) growth over low-relevance brands;¹⁰

Harley-Davidson for example, has not only created a community of intensely loyal customers — who sometimes wait up to a year for their new bikes and pay U.S. \$2,000 to \$4,000 above the sticker price — it has, as a result, also enjoyed 16 consecutive years of record revenue and earnings, an annual earnings growth of 37% and a share price that is up 15,000% since 1986.¹¹

If you move from a communications-only brand, like the drug store that advertises friendly, neighborhood service but comes off feeling sterile and impersonal to customers, to an integrated brand, you will also experience higher levels of growth — **even in a mature market**. That's because you will have successfully clarified a customer's emotional and intellectual reasons for buying from you rather than from the competition. Brands are assets that organisations can use to drive economic value above and

beyond business infrastructure. Therefore, brands have a unique and powerful role in formulating business strategy.

Even during times of corporate distress, having a strong brand can be valuable. Brokerage firms have reported fondness for companies with powerful brands that have securities trading at low levels. In an article entitled 'Favorite Feasts: Good Brands Hit by Bad Luck' published in *The New York Times*, 21 January 2001, Riva Atlas suggests that these investors find 'the assets of these companies easier to value and, if necessary to sell off... (such as) the Vail ski resort; retailers like Barneys, Bloomingdale's and Macy's; and Continental Airlines, to name a few'.

FedEx is one company that makes bold promises — and keeps them. Founder and CEO Fred Smith is a leader who believes in the power of on-brand actions, and is frequently quoted as being in support of living the brand. The result is that when you think overnight delivery, you think FedEx. The brand is synonymous with quick, reliable delivery.¹²



So what does it look like to 'live' quick and reliable delivery? How do you apply it to every person, process and action throughout the company? 'As consumers, we're quick to form opinions about FedEx based on the emotions we feel when, for instance, we hear the drop box closing. Does it sound cheap and tinny? Secure and reassuring? Do we fear that it didn't quite shut all the way and someone will come and pour coffee all over our very valuable packages? These things matter to us'.¹³ And so FedEx set about rethinking and redesigning everything from its customer centers to its drop boxes to the bags carried by its couriers. It even went so far as to redesign the electronic scanners carried by FedEx drivers so that they were quicker and more reliable.

FedEx's Smith clearly understands brand equity on a level that many companies do not. His ability to harness the FedEx brand by living it makes all the difference for the shipping giant as it moves into increasingly competitive times.

But the benefits of a strong brand accrue in direct proportion to the degree your brand is integrated.

INTEGRATED BRANDING DEFINED

An integrated brand is one in which every part contains the whole; where every action is based on the brand. Many companies, small and large, are doing this today. Their brands are powerful not because of the number of ads they run during televised sporting events but because of the customer loyalty they generate and maintain during good times and bad. In fact, communication alone doesn't even do a good job of generating awareness, let alone brand loyalty. According to a study of 80 online businesses performed by Copernicus, a marketing consulting firm in Newton, Massachusetts, these companies typically realized only a .03% rise in awareness for each U.S. \$1 million they put into advertising.¹⁴

Examples of large, international companies that do a good job of living their brand include Amazon.com, IBM, Volvo, Avis, FedEx, Nike, Ikea, Apple, Starbucks, Sony, and 3M. Smaller organisations that are doing it well include Group Health, Trendwest Resorts, Sakson & Taylor, Avande and Seattle Children's Home. Each of these organisations has clearly defined the center of its brand's gravity, communicated that center, and is acting upon it. Each company's employees understand the meaning of their brands, and pull together in the same direction to build and sustain them.

The difference between integrated branding and what others may think is branding, is that typical branding efforts are focused solely on communication tools to build awareness. For a company to start seeing the results of an integrated brand, it must also be using brand attributes to guide actions within the company: in senior management; product and or service development; sales; human resources; operations, marketing; and customer service. Without company alignment and execution — living your brand — all branding efforts are doomed to fall short.

Your brand must be based on actual company strengths, rather than a pasted-on mask — no matter how pretty. Otherwise, your branding efforts will not create a sustainable advantage. Integrated branding is the way for organisations to achieve their vision. It does this by providing a clear map

Once there was a financial services company that thought branding would help it appeal to more customers. By coming up with a customer-friendly message and personality, reflected in the company's logo and ads, the company believed it could attract more customers and make them more loyal. So far, so good. The company went through a brand development exercise, where it decided that its customers would respond to a value of **respectful**. It created a corporate identity and a marketing campaign that showed respect through a strong-yet-not-brash logo and through advertisements that told customers they would be treated as partners, where their needs would be understood and honored.

Then things started to go wrong. Customers responded well to the advertising campaign and the company's new look, but found that the company wasn't delivering on its promises. The customers didn't come back. You see, the sales employees believed the senior management team didn't truly respect them, much less worry about the customers. In turn, they grew cynical about their jobs, making the customers' experience of the brand even worse than it was prior to the brand exercise. Soon word got out in the company that branding doesn't work, and the company reverted to its previous way of doing things.

Why did this branding exercise go astray so badly? Because the company was fundamentally confused about branding, believing it was a marketing-only function. Saying that branding is just about marketing is like going to a restaurant that features great décor, advertising, service and a tantalizing menu, but serves inedible food.

to making decisions: providing clarity on which actions to do more of to cement customer relationships.

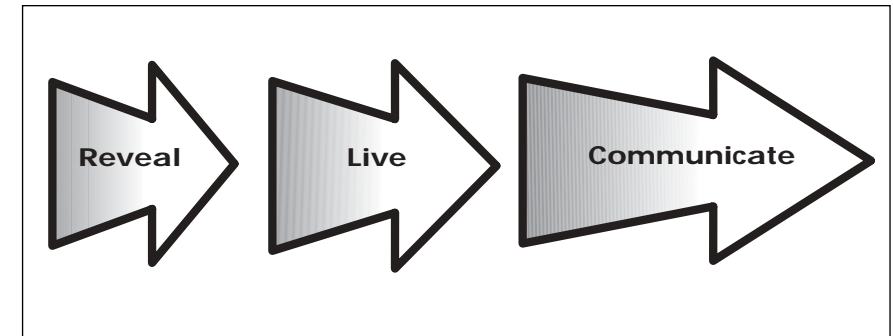
THE INTEGRATED BRANDING PROCESS

For the integrated branding process (Figure 1.3) to work its full magic, there are three key areas that a company must explore and execute thoroughly:

1. brand clarity;
2. company activity alignment;
3. communications.

FIGURE 1.3 Integrated Branding Process

Integrating your brand is a three-part process: reveal it, ensure everyone throughout your company is living it, and communicate it to all audiences.



Brand Clarity

First, you have to **know who you are**. The key reason most branding efforts fail is that no one took the time to understand the brand's inherent meaning and then articulate it in a way that people could act on. To know what this inherent meaning is, you have to do research. This means asking customers, prospects, employees, partners, analysts, vendors, distributors and others, questions that get to the heart of what you bring to the party. Then, you need to sort through all that data to discover the brand assets of your company. A brand asset is any company activity that benefits customers, such as a unique customer experience, unique company approach, company reputation, industry leadership position, quality control systems, employee skill, company culture, employee compensation and rewards, and delivery systems. You also need to discover the personality people attribute to your company and the associations people have with your brand. Finally, you need to refine these assets and attributes into actionable brand tools.

The **Volkswagen Beetle** brand is a good example of how brand clarity creates brand value. While many people attribute the Beetle's success to the car's quality, low maintenance costs and unique look, Volkswagen was clear that the brand assets of a Beetle were around building **special relationships** with customers. 'Moreover, there are several things that VW itself did that seemed to reinforce its growing emotional segment (for

example, quirky media campaigns, owner magazines in the 1960s, gold watch rewards for Beetle longevity and bonds for babies born in Beetles).¹⁵ According to James M. Flammang in his book *Volkswagen: Beetles, Buses & Beyond*, 'Life Magazine dubbed the Volkswagen "a member of the family" that just happens to live in the garage'.¹⁶

Some companies achieve brand clarity, only to stop there. Marketing may use the brand tools to drive communications, but if you ask other employees in such a company what their brand is, you'll get a blank stare or they'll point to the logo. Some companies take branding to the next level, where they ensure a consistent experience at every customer touch point, by training sales, marketing and customer service to live the brand. But the full benefit of integrated branding can't be achieved until *all* employees are living it.

Company Activity Alignment

Second, you must have **organisational alignment**, or you can't achieve an integrated brand. For long-term success, you must create a company filled with leaders leading from the brand and employees executing upon it. This requires a whole new way of thinking, from getting leaders to be brand evangelists, to setting up employee compensation systems rewarding brand-based behaviour, hiring based on branding, organising company processes and designing products and services to reflect the brand. This is not a one-time event or program. It takes an ongoing commitment and effort from leaders at all levels to align the organisation to execute on the brand.

Avis Rent a Car Systems focuses on how customers feel about every step of the rental car experience, and then applies that knowledge to the process of renting a car. Knowing that customers care most about a convenient, speedy process, Avis concentrates on aligning all company actions to create a customer experience of **stress-free transportation**. Recent brand changes include: training counter agents to observe and anticipate customers' needs, reducing perceived ambiguity by putting headphones on counter agents and providing Internet connections and posting flight information in its lounges and rental offices.¹⁷

Communication Tools

Lastly, you have to **tell the world who you are**. Brand-based communications delivers the brand tools you'll learn how to develop in the next chapter,

verbally and visually, via logos, ad campaigns, collateral, taglines, brand characters, colors, public relations, direct mail and Web sites. Rather than the place to focus all of your branding efforts, communications are the last step. Effective communication of brand messages will turbo-charge your marketing efforts, ensuring the message rings true to the customer and that every communication conveys the same overall message and feeling. And if you kick off your brand in a big way, via enthusiastic communications to employees *and* clear, compelling communications to customers, you will have better luck at sustaining your brand efforts.

Outdoor consumer-cooperative retailer **REI** uses every opportunity to communicate its brand. Using a tagline of 'Get Outside Yourself™', REI focuses its employees on communicating 'The Seven Summits of the REI Brand Experience' a series of values with a big emphasis on giving customers a taste of the experience they will have using REI gear. For example, on the side of its shopping bags it features first-person testimonies such as the following:

'Almost there'. Fragile, crusty snow lingers in the high valley. We occasionally punch through to our thighs. So going is slow. My 5-year-old son gives in to exhaustion. I set down my pack, hoist him on my back and cautiously cover the last mile to camp, food and rest. He recovers. Then, as the sun's last rays turn the peaks to glowing orange snow cones, he says 'That hike is longer than its sounds, isn't it?' 'Yes, it is'. 'Can we do it again soon?'

Many companies invest in brand clarity and communicate the brand externally, **but don't actively attend to organisation alignment and execution**. Executing and delivering on your brand's promise doesn't just magically happen because the marketing department did some 'branding work'. Companies that execute well know that behind every strong brand is insight and commitment from company leaders. This type of brand leadership shows up every day in the choices leaders make within all functions and at all levels — especially those leaders closest to customers, leaders who are often not at the top of the organisation chart. These choices shape key touch-point experiences with customers and the impressions they walk away with.

In this book, we will focus on the company alignment and execution necessary for companies to live their brands. We will outline what leaders

must do to live the brand, and how they can lead others to do the same. This is not a step-by-step handbook, but a framework for applying tested practices that are proven to increase company value and profitability. Whether you work for a start-up, a service company, a manufacturer, a large diversified corporation, a non-profit or a technology company, this framework will make your leadership more effective.

We will also address how to achieve brand clarity and how to communicate the brand. It is only through day-to-day actions that a company can truly say: 'We have integrated our brand into everything we do, and are living our promise to our customers'.

EVERY LEADER'S JOURNEY

According to *The New Rules of Branding*, by Court, Forsyth, Kelly and Loch, of McKinsey, 'A distinctive consumer experience that matches the brand promise requires consistent brand delivery. To make this happen, the brand leader must identify and prioritize key touch points, then translate the brand's meaning at those key touch points into guidelines that mobilize and inspire the people who are delivering the brand experience'.¹⁸

Brand leadership is a journey that uses tools, management and measurement to create distinctiveness despite inevitable changes in the market, employees and competition. The penalty for not exercising brand leadership is the loss of market position and brand assets, a de-focused workforce, and the deploying of conflicting strategies that waste precious resources.

Living the integrated brand is a responsibility of every leader, at every level. That's what leading is all about: Aligning employees behind company goals and doing so in a way that maximizes profitability and return on investment. But effective leadership is no accident. Effective leaders know what behaviours cause others to follow them. **And regardless of your position, you are only a leader if others follow your lead.** Being a great leader isn't the result of an extensive education or a powerhouse resume. Being a great brand leader is **simultaneously** holding and demonstrating your convictions about how to live your brand while maintaining your connection with others.

We designed this book as a guide to give company leaders the concepts, tools and processes they'll need to build powerful integrated brands.

TRAVEL GUIDE TO LIVING THE INTEGRATED BRAND

This book is a travel guide for leaders on how to live their company's integrated brand. It is divided into mile markers that will increase your ability to execute on your company's brand promise.

This is a travel guide, not a to-do list. Branding isn't something you do once and then it's done. As a leader, you will continuously improve your brand while adapting it to a changing world. *Brand Driven* suggests the most direct and cost-effective route to revealing and building your company's integrated brand. It will:

- give you the knowledge and direction necessary to create the right leadership strategies;
- show you effective ways to exercise leadership as you build the brand company-wide or in departments and work groups;
- save you from wasting your time, money and resources doing non-productive company activities.

Every leader can play a role in living the integrated brand. But the ideas and directions provided in each chapter will not apply to every leader in the same way. You'll need to determine how you can turn direction into action, given your current leadership circumstances. Each chapter (or mile marker) is there to help you prepare for and deploy an integrated brand, while avoiding getting lost. Please note that Chapters 13–17 address specific audiences in living the integrated brand, such as non-profits, healthcare organisations and start-ups. Chapter 18 is a 'Pocket Travel Guide'. It summarizes key points from each chapter in a quick-reference format.

Ask yourself at each mile marker *'Have I (and other leaders) done this yet? What's at risk if I (and other leaders) don't do this? What's the first step I should take, given my leadership role and function?'*

Enjoy the journey.

EXECUTIVE LEADER LOG

Interesting — since I've been at the helm, I've tightened our processes to be more efficient, I've instituted a performance-review system that no longer lets long-time employees who've been coasting get away with not working to their best abilities, and I've nailed our service and support department to the wall, after doing random customer surveys and finding out all the problems we create for our customers. Integrated branding — which sounds like it takes a more strengths-based approach to fixing problems — might be the next best thing I can initiate here. My VP of marketing's been trying to get on my calendar for months now to talk about a new logo and annual report design. That stuff's just fluff to me, but if I could wrap those things into a larger, more meaningful initiative that helps address serious, larger issues — threats and opportunities — it may be worth investing in a new look. It would certainly make a visual reminder of some major changes I'd be asking people here to make, for the sake of the company's long-term-future viability in the market.

HUMAN RESOURCES LEADER LOG

In exit interviews, departing employees have remarked that we 'believe our own BS'. Sounds like they're saying we don't always walk the talk, and that we don't face up to that like we should. Maybe the integrated branding process could help us face up to our words but also move us on quickly to making it right.

SALES LEADER LOG

We've had it hammered into us here that the salesperson 'owns' the experience with the customer. But this integrated branding theory says the customer experience needs to be owned by **everyone** in the company. This will be a big change for us, if we

make it. How can we do it successfully without losing the benefits that holding salespeople fully accountable for customers' care brings us? Something to think about: What are our salespeople doing well that others in the company can start doing too? Going about it this way would be a good start to getting the salespeople to think of themselves as leaders.

Notes

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