

Is your brand emotionally and functionally on target?



# Branding Self-Examination

*White Paper*

First let us say thank you for taking a few minutes out of your busy schedule to read our White Paper and taking the Branding Self-Examination on the health of your brand. Branding is one of those subjects and disciplines that has basic components such as logos and usage guidelines, however the deeper and all encompassing aspects are often overlooked. Therefore, this paper, focuses on the importance of going beyond mere images and encourages you to address all aspects of building a brand that will earn you not only consumer loyalty, but make them champions of your products and services. Your brand is your greatest asset.

It is important to understand that your clients (we prefer to call them partners) perceive value (good, bad, or indifference) from everything your company or organization does.

Financial institutions have gone through a lot of turmoil recently and the market has left people searching for - in fact, demanding a better model. They are unsure about the financial brands of the past and are guarded about future relationships. Is this a major challenge, or an opportunity? **We believe it is a giant opportunity!**

Now's the time to RE-examine, RE-align, RE-fresh and RE-introduce *YOUR DISTINCTIVE BRAND*.

We will address, define and help you examine:

- *What is a brand?*
- *Why your brand is your most important asset.*
- *The Emotional and Functional brand balance.*
- *The Purpose Driven Brand.*
- *14 Question Branding Self Examination.*
- *Scoring your Branding Self Examination.*



## What is a brand?

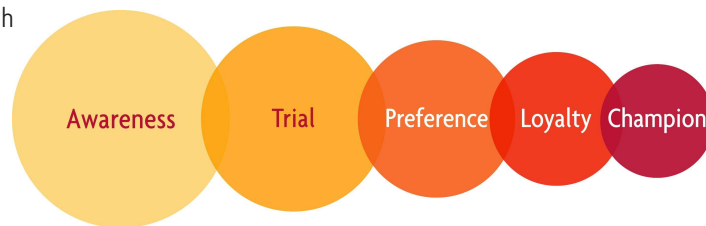
Brand and branding are terms we have all heard a great deal about, and in many different contexts. You may feel you have a solid understanding about brands, or you may be one of those who know it is important, but don't really understand it. If you were to ask twelve different marketing and branding professionals their definitions of branding, you would get twelve different answers. Branding touches and influences everything your company or organization does.

In some ways it's easier to list what a brand **is not**. Many have focused on only the visual expression as being the brand; logo, colors and the look and feel of marketing materials. That is like saying a ten-gallon hat and boots makes someone a cowboy. Those items express their cowboy personality, but they don't make someone a cowboy.

Even if you have never gone through a formal branding process, you already have a brand. A critical part of branding is people's perception of them, whether or not you've been managing or guiding them. Doesn't it then make sense to build your brand, manage it effectively, and use it to lead people to **your** desired results?

A brand is built as the consumer goes through the five phases of brand engagement:

1. *Awareness*
2. *Trial*
3. *Preference*
4. *Loyalty*
5. *Champion*



Your brand is introduced by marketing. Then, consumers build expectations. Once they have an actual experience, they decide its value. You know your brand is working when a person chooses your products and/or services instead of your competitors because they value your distinctive brand offerings.

In our twenty years of defining and building **Purpose Driven Brands**, this is the best definition of exactly what a "brand" is: A brand is all the tangible and intangible distinctive characteristics, culture and reputation of a product, service or organization. It is a promise that when delivered consistently, creates a perception in the minds of the individuals, groups, and targeted audiences. It is their perception of value: costs, time, and experiences...and how you met their needs.

## Why your brand is your most important asset

A major problem for organizations is often the lack of clarity in those items that can guide and keep them on course. Branding starts by answering the internal questions about culture, purpose, values, and defines your unique attributes. Then, by focusing on the external questions, such as who your target audience is, what they value, brand SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and what sets you apart from your primary competitors... you will gain a clear vision and direction. With this strategic information defined, you can create your unique brand promise. The promise will help you articulate your values internally and become the benchmark that everyone from the executive, marketing, hiring managers, etc. to measure their decisions against. By defining your distinctive brand you create the foundation for all other components to be built upon.

Starting with strategic awareness, which occurs when your target audience recognizes your brand, they understand your unique qualities that make you better than the competition, they will value you for it. This distinction is also referred to as your **Unique Selling Proposition** or USP. Your USP tells your target audience why they should select and value you over competing brands.

### *The benefits of a well-defined and strong brand foundation*

- Cultivate a unified, inspired employee culture that *lives* the brand.
- Increase your success with hiring the right employee.
- Leverage your brand differences and stand out from your competitors.
- Drive key marketing decisions -- faster on messaging, expression, media while always being on-brand.
- Create trust and an emotional attachment that build consumer loyalty and referrals.
- Build a consistent image and name recognition.
- A strong brand influences and helps make purchasing decisions.
- Create consistent brand experiences that win customers for life.
- Create long-term growth and sustainability for your business.
- Reduce customer price sensitivity.



## The Emotional and Functional brand balance

Brands have many parts and perspective. In our discovery phase, we focus on both the emotional and functional components of your brand, making sure that they are always in alignment with the brand promise and are supportive of each other. As an example, if your chosen brand leadership position is “technology” a few questions would be: Is your staff’s culture and personality able to support that? Do they have a strong interest in it? Is there correct and ongoing training? Are you financially able to support it?

There are many other issues connected with this, but it is the balance of both emotional and functional factors that’s important here. The staff has to want and be able to deliver on the brand promise. Equally it must match with what your targeted audiences needs and desires are, so you can build strong brand relationships with them.

## Purpose Driven Brand – Why are we here?

Brands are complex. At its core, every company or organization has that single idea and purpose that makes them uniquely who they are. An organization whose employees can answer the question, “Why are we here”, will be the organization that makes a stronger connection with consumers in search of solutions that meet their needs. Although a lot of attention is focused on discovering that singular distinction, it is also very important to note that by the time this phase of the branding process is completed, the organization’s real culture is also clearly defined.

We have observed many branding and marketing professionals putting all of their focus on creating a difference, which is important, but it cannot be manufactured.

The only way effective branding can be sustained for any length of time is if you take a 360 degree review of all your relevant internal and external factors then cultivate your unique and **Purpose Driven Brand** focus from the organizations real DNA. While it is very important to establish your brand promise, brand attributes and target audience, it is also realistic that even with that limited focus it will be less clear at times of how to apply an equal balance to everything. That is why a brand strategy is like a pyramid with a broad foundation that rises to a single point. That single point is the **Purpose Driven Brand** attribute that drives everything no matter what it is: Most knowledgeable, latest technology, great relationships, lowest price, convenience...it is number one on brand criteria reviews.

People may have a range of perceptions about your organization, but there should be a single brand attribute that is top of mind for everyone internally and externally when they think of your organization.

By having this narrow purpose advancing your culture, it becomes a mindset with your target audience, and then you will own that leadership position in your market.

## Branding Self Examination Questionnaire

In answering these questions it is important to remember that brands are emotional and are not defined on spreadsheets. Answer from your perspective and to the best of your knowledge, how your brand is performing in each area. Each question will have a range of possible points and it will be the point total that will define your brand's health.

### DEFINING YOUR BRAND

**1 From this list of brand components, identify the ones your company or organization has defined or formalized.**

- Mission Statement
- Vision Statements
- Value Statements
- Brand Attributes
- Brand Promise
- Brand Tagline
- Leadership Position
- Competitor Brand SWOTs
- Employee Brand Booklet
- Brand Standards Manual
- Primary Target Audience Profile

*1 point for each item checked off - total\_\_\_\_\_*

**2 Can you clearly identify your target audience? Identify the ones you have defined or formalized.**

- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- Income
- Free-time activities
- What auto they own
- Where they shop
- What financial products they use most
- What financial services they use most
- What they value most (price, convenience, knowledge, relationship, etc.)

*1 point for each item checked off - total\_\_\_\_\_*

**3 Can you clearly differentiate your company or organization from your top competitors?**

- A – No
- B - Yes

*0 points for A - 5 point for B - total\_\_\_\_\_*



## BUILDING YOUR BRAND

**4 How consistently is your brand promise reinforced? On stationery, brand posters, is it read at your meetings (small and large), in your decision-making process, etc.? Select the percentage that best matches your organizations use.**

A - 0%      B - 20%      C - 40%      D - 60%      E - 80%      F - 100%

*0 points for A - 1 point for B - 2 points for C - 3 points for D - 4 points for E - 5 points for F - total\_\_\_\_\_*

**5 Do you conduct internal brand training and/or brand meetings to discuss the brand's status, measure development and how to make your brand more recognizable? If so how often?**

A - Do not      B - Once per quarter      C - Twice annually      D - Annually

*0 points for A - 5 point for B - 3 points for C - 2 points for D - total\_\_\_\_\_*

**6 To what percentage do you deliver your brand promise to your target audience everyday?**

A - 0%      B - 20%      C - 40%      D - 60%      E - 80%      F - 100%

*0 points for A - 1 point for B - 2 points for C - 3 points for D - 4 points for E - 5 points for F - total\_\_\_\_\_*

**7 What percentage of your target audience, if asked, would be able to correctly describe what your brand leadership position is in the market place?**

A - 0%      B - 20%      C - 40%      D - 60%      E - 80%      F - 100%

*0 points for A - 1 point for B - 2 points for C - 3 points for D - 4 points for E - 5 points for F - total\_\_\_\_\_*

## MANAGING YOUR BRAND

**8 Rate your management of your brand for the following:**

*(scale 1-5 with 5 being the best)*

Establishing brand clarity among employees	1	2	3	4	5
Establishing differences in the marketplace	1	2	3	4	5
Advancing customer brand awareness and recall	1	2	3	4	5
Consistent brand messaging	1	2	3	4	5
Consistent brand image/design	1	2	3	4	5
Consistent use of brand standards on all touch points	1	2	3	4	5
Effective brand marketing/advertising placement	1	2	3	4	5
Brand standards that help manage and lower costs	1	2	3	4	5



*Use the actual number that you selected for each question in scoring - total\_\_\_\_\_*

**9 How much do you feel your brand influences people to use your products and/or services?**

*(on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being none and 5 being great)*

1 2 3 4 5

*Use the actual number that you selected for your brand's influence scoring this question - total \_\_\_\_\_*

**10 How much do you feel your brand influences people who have tried your financial services and helps promote loyalty to your company or organization?**

*(on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being none and 5 being great)*

1 2 3 4 5

*Use the actual number that you selected for your brand's customer loyalty scoring this question - total \_\_\_\_\_*

**11 How recently have you conducted external consumer research to measure your brand effectiveness?**

A - In the last 12 months

B - Between 1 & 3 years

C - Over 4 years ago

*5 points for A - 2 point for B - 0 points for C - total \_\_\_\_\_*

**12 Have you mapped every possible contact point you have with your consumers or potential consumers and reinforced your brand promise for each?**

A - No

B - Yes

*0 points for A - 5 point for B - total \_\_\_\_\_*

**13 Check off which of these items are aligned with and also strongly express your brand.**

Your name

Your products/services names

Where and how you advertise

Your logo

Your branch environments

Visual design and style of your marketing

Your tagline

How your employees dress

Your website functions, visual look and feel

*1 point for each item checked off - total \_\_\_\_\_*

**14 Do you measure and track your brand's effectiveness by any of these methods?**

Marketing Return On Investment or Return On Objectives

A - No

B - Yes

External Brand Research

A - No

B - Yes

Internal Employee Brand Surveys

A - No

B - Yes

*0 points for every A - 5 point for every B - total \_\_\_\_\_*

**Your brand health score total \_\_\_\_\_** *Score explanations on the following page*



## Branding Self-Examination Score Explanation

Now that you have completed the Self-Examination Questionnaire, all you need to do is add up your score. The higher your score number, the healthier your brand is.

**Emergency Care** – a score between 10 and 35

**Under a Doctor's Care** – a score between 36 and 65

**Stable** – a score between 66 and 95

**Healthy and Fit** – a score between 96 and 131

After answering these questions, and establishing your brand's health score, we hope it has given you insight to areas that a strong brand possesses. The stronger your brand, the greater your target audience loyalty is, the clearer your direction for marketing is, higher satisfaction and retention of employees is and all areas of the organization will be more effective.

**Emergency Care** - We believe your brand's health is at risk of flat lining from lack of attention. We suggest that you seek outside professional attention quickly. Your brand is most likely in need of a ridged exercise program of internal and external research and a diet high in focus and guidance.

**Under a Doctor's Care** - You probably don't need to rush to the hospital, but you may be losing muscle and market share, and have poor vision because your brand is not strong enough to defend your brand position.

**Stable** - You can possibly meet today's challenges in the marketplace, but we recommend a check-up to see what is needed to get you to the next level.

**Healthy and Fit** - You are in great shape, and probably have a good understanding of what it takes to get to this level! If you don't already have an ongoing fitness program and the commitment to keep moving in the right direction, you might want to consider getting a branding coach.

James Clark Design has been bringing value and helping financial institutions RE-examine, RE-align, RE-fresh and RE-introduce their Distinctive Brands for over twenty years. Please visit [jcdi.com](http://jcdi.com) and click on Resources to see examples of "*Building Brands That Build Business*".

