

THE COURSE

DRAGOS ALEXA

A pair of hands, shown in grayscale, holds a bright yellow circle. From the center of the circle, numerous black lines of varying lengths radiate outwards, creating a sunburst or starburst effect. The background is a solid, vibrant yellow.

BRANDS
— COME —
TRUE

THE COURSE

DRAGOS ALEXA

BRANDS

— COME —

TRUE

BRANDS COME TRUE

The branding course for entrepreneurs

By Dragos Alexa

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What any entrepreneur needs to know about **growing** his business into a strong and valuable brand.

This book - course **is not** about transforming you into an overnight branding expert, but it offers the right amount of info that you will need in order to really have success in your entrepreneurial Journey.

There are no magic formulas, nor universal algorithms that will assure Success. The Journey itself is about working with passion, dreaming realistically, believing in you and transforming failures into teachings (if they occur).

You will understand how to prepare, to empower and to evolve your brand.

You will find out how to properly invest in successful branding activities.

Have fun!

Thank you, God
for what I've already received!

Dreaming about growing a brand

Let's face it! There are so few young entrepreneurs that dream about growing a brand. Money – that's the real dream, isn't it?

Everyone involved in any business Journey should dream about growing a brand because it surpasses the Money frenesy and wishing for overnight Fake Successes. It is not necessarily about getting rich, but materialising passions and helping clients consume a better product or service provided by your company. Yes, money are important. No, your are not shallow if you think about money. When you will understand what a brand stands for, in terms of practicality, you will also see clearer everything that you need to do in order to have a real successful business experience.

In my 13+ years career the most common misconception that I've met with my clients is that of fear of dreaming too big. Branding is not for the rich, but for the smart ones. You should do everything related to your company as being a

Global Brand even if you are just a small corner coffee-shop. Dream about it and make it happen. This is not a motivational type of unrealistic urge. I am not asking you to day-dream about becoming the next Starbucks. I am telling you that you can grow a brand that can change your client's lives for the better. You have this power! You really do. What you need to do is to make it happen in small steps each and every day.

After reading this book, you'll have proofs about the fact that **brands come true**, that your dreams of accomplishing business success come true.

Let's start!

What's the book all about

The **Brands come true** book will help you grow your business and empower your brand by making you understand how to manage your business communication, marketing and advertising in the healthy branding way

YOU WILL NOT LEARN

- How to create logos – this is not what branding is
- How to do marketing – this is what branding stands for
- How to handle trademarks – this is... no way.

The book covers **5 modules** or steps in learning what branding can do for you and your company:

Introduction in Branding

(3 lessons)

Getting the right foundation

First of all we need to bust all the myths that surround the terminology and the common understanding of BRAND and BRANDING.

If you don't understand what these are then you will not be able to use the power that comes by correctly making use of them.

Questions that you'll be answered:

- What a BRAND is? What is not a BRAND?
- What is BRANDING?
- What is the difference between the two?
- How can BRANDING help you and your company?
What are the gains and what will you accomplish?

The ingredients

(4 lessons)

Find out what are your unique ingredients

If you want to grow a tree that will make the best fruits, which will be healthy, that will stand against the worse weather, you need the right seed. In the business context, the seed contains a great product, a consistent value proposition, a correct business model. What is essential also is the fact that the most important part of this seed is YOU and your mind-set.

Questions that you'll be answered:

- What do you need to do before starting your own business? What questions should you answer?
- What are the INGREDIENTS that you need for healthy growing your brand?
- How to define the simplest and healthiest business model for you?
- How to get your Product or Service ready for the real world? What do you need for that?

The essential tools

(3 lessons)

Create the tools that you need in order to properly communicate your brand

Your own business seed is essential. It provides the necessary INGREDIENTS for generating a process together with a professional agency that will offer you the needed TOOLS that will represent your brand in different Universes.

Questions that you'll be answered:

- How to get the right creative agency as a partner?
- What do you need to prepare in order to correctly brief the professionals?
- What are the stages in working with a creative agency? What should you expect from them?
- What TOOLS you may grow with their help?

(re)Start branding

(3 lessons)

Start using those tools in your communication so that people will fall in love with you

Your own business seed is essential. It provides the necessary INGREDIENTS for generating a process together with a professional agency that will offer you the needed TOOLS that will represent your brand in different Universes.

Questions that you'll be answered:

- How will you integrate branding in everything your company does?
- How do you track results in order to find out what TOOLS work and which one don't?
- How do you need to evolve from a one man show company to a team of specialists?

(re)Start branding

(3 lessons)

Never stop doing branding and keep evolving everything

If you want a healthy brand that will continue to grow and be healthy, you never stop taking care of it. If you do, then it will die. It's that simple.

Questions that you'll be answered:

- What can you do to best avoid failure? What are the actions that will help you decide if you're heading in the right direction?
- What do you need to continue in doing each month as branding related activities inside your marketing, advertising, sales support, PR, etc?
- How does brand management occur from your side?

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Introduction to Branding

Module Introduction

I would like to transform your business frame of mind so that you digest branding activities **each and every day** simply because this is the healthiest way to have a successful business.

Branding, a process vital to Business Management, is the only sure way for your Company to grow and have lifelong success, to become truly profitable and powerful. Other methods are based merely on luck; they are uncontrollable and therefore futile.

The first thing that I want you to understand is that

It's never too early
to think about branding

A lot of business owners assume that this type of activity is **only** for large corporations with large in-house marketing teams and budgets of millions (of the appropriate currency) dedicated to branding. This is more or less like saying that only rich people can eat healthy.

Is this true?

No, of course **it isn't**.

YES, it is **easier** to have an unbalanced diet.

YES, it is **cheaper** to eat unhealthy.

YES, it is **faster** to eat junk food.

However, it is our choice to live this way, to have a less-than-healthy lifestyle. Excuses are easy to find as we try to create shortcuts on the path to a healthy lifestyle. Thus, we create reasons: we don't have the time, we don't have the will power, we are not motivated.

These decisions are similar to the ones that we need to make for a business, from the moment we decide to create the concept, from the exact second we decide we want to

sell something to someone – whether that is a Product, a service or an idea.

You can do it the easy, cheap and fast way. This will turn out to be **unhealthy**. Or, you can do it the **right way**.

Nothing will ensure the success of your business. That is impossible. You should raise an eyebrow at anyone who promises that.

Branding is about considerably increasing the chances of your business succeeding.

The first decision you need to make is to decide that you actually want this; YOU want to find out more about what branding means.

Getting this book is THE FIRST step.

You are on the right track!

Let's continue!

The hardest part of branding isn't starting;
it's continuing this practice forever.

Don't worry, at some point, it is going to be as easy as breathing. You will be able to do it instinctively.

Branding is not rocket science

It is one of the most natural ways of doing business. You just need to be open minded and honest with yourself and with your Customers. You need to commit to actively respecting promises, and you need to invest time, money and considerable other resources into branding. It is easy, but it is not free.

The following is very important: your promise and the message you convey must **always** be reflected in what you do and in the identity you represent and promote.

It is important to start the journey of understanding what a brand is and what the activity of branding entails without seeking a clear-cut definition, avoiding technical, rigid ways of thinking. Branding is like a teen crush — you cannot describe it in exact words; everybody has had one so everybody understands it from his or her own experience

and perspective. If what we wanted was a definition, then this would have to be different for each person, and, in particular, for each Consumer, since the context of interacting with the Product and the background experience of each and one of us are unique. This doesn't make things harder and more complicated. We just need to learn, for the sake of the business we seek to make successful, that brands and branding are part of an entity that we cannot touch with our own two hands, that we cannot always describe accurately or duplicate accordingly.

Quick shortcut clarifications

The terms “BRAND” and “BRANDING” are not equal in meaning.

BRAND is a state.

BRANDING is an action or a set of actions.

The simplest definitions that I've created for my clients are:

BRAND is the sum of **perceptions** in the mind of each person who has come across your Product.

Later on in this module, I'll go deeper into this set of logical details so that you can get a detailed image of what this definition entails and clearly understand each concept used in the unique "Brands Come True" definition.

BRANDING is **any conscious activity** that the Company performs to **try** to influence this set of perceptions in people's minds.

Not to change, not to alter, but to influence. "Try" to influence because there are no certainties when working with people's minds.

Busting the top 5 myths about brands:

1. A logo, a name or a slogan alone doesn't make a Product a BRAND.
2. The Product alone does not create a BRAND.
3. If you are applying for a Trademark, this will not automatically create a BRAND.
4. Just one advertisement or a marketing campaign will not transform your Product into a BRAND.

5. A promise of quality, of experience or of value helps but does not create a BRAND.

How to use the terms correctly in conversations

Try as much as you can to use the proper terms in your business vocabulary.

I would suggest you avoid using sentences such as:

"I have a brand." - You cannot really own the brand (judicially, you may own the company that is connected to the brand). You cannot own the perception of your clients (see above). A more accurate approach would be to say *"I manage a brand"* or *"I have a product that stands as a strong brand in its market."*

"An agency created my brand" - That's not true. The agency provided you with a set of instruments (logo, strategy plan, branding procedures, etc.). It did not create a brand. Again, you must remember that brands are perceptions that act as attitudes towards your Product or services.

"My brand is better." - Instead, try *"my brand is stronger."* When you make this statement, you should have proof of

market research at hand. You need to have performed a social inquiry on the existent market (the sum of all clients) that proves this statement precisely. Many business owners make this claim while considering only the anatomy of the Product itself (ingredients, recipe, manufacturing techniques, development process). However, as previously pointed out, the better Product may not be represented by the stronger brand.

What can be considered branding?

As you may notice, I did not ask what constitutes branding, since when talking about branding, I actually mean branding activities.

The secret is this:

Everything you do and everything your company does may be considered branding.

This should be seriously taken into consideration when choosing activities that help you make your brand stronger.

Understanding what brand and branding stand for, in further detail

In the previous lesson I issued this definition:

BRAND is the sum of perceptions in the mind of each person who has come across your Product.

Let's talk about this in further detail.

By **sum of perceptions** I am having in mind five directions:

- **Mind Reflection** – When you try to remember something, your brain usually creates a mental image of the thing you are trying to recollect. It may be a static snapshot, a short movie clip, or an audio track played by your brain's "media player." We try to connect a tangible coordinate to that memory item. This is the reason that a lot of people think logos are brands. For example, since it is so easy to connect the perception of Coca-Cola with its logo, the logo is

one of the easiest ways to remember it. In their mind's eye, some people see the logo, while others may picture the image of the bottle, hear the jingle or see the video ad with that girl. Some may experience all of the above.

- **Emotions** – These can be positive, negative or neutral, happy, sad, comfortable or embarrassed. They are the split-second emotions that reflect your interaction with the Product. *“How does this Product make me feel when I use it? How about after using it?”* It is these emotions that help you label Products and Services that you are using on a daily basis. This labeling is not necessarily backed up by coherent, logical reasons, but by a raw consumer instinct. Of course, if you want to rationalize your emotions, you can always come up with an explanation.
- **Experience** – This includes interface, materials, texture and everything else that describes an average person's interaction with the Product on all five sensory levels (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch).
- **Reputation** – Whether we like it or not, we are influenced by what other people think. This is true both in general, with people who we come across but don't actually know and people whose opinions we hear, and, mostly and especially, with our friends. Regarding the latter category, the opinions of friends build a very strong reputation, one that is either positive or negative.

- **Opinion** – This is part of the mosaic of perceptions that builds up the idea of brand in our minds. Opinion is related to personal values, which end up being reflected onto the Product. It takes into account things like quality (Is it good enough for my needs?), price statement (Can I afford it?) or trust (Is it trustworthy?). The list can go on and on, with fun, cool, optimistic or any other “brand value” characteristics that you succeed in perceiving with respect to the Product.

Every person has a **unique mosaic** of perceptions that generates the idea of a brand and that is related to a Product.

Each mosaic is structured differently with different percentages. For some people, the lead element will be the Mind Reflection ingredient. For others, the Emotional side will be on the top of the list.

Over a period of time, the same person may have different perceptions of a Product that change based on the dynamics of information and the person’s interactions with the product.

Let’s continue:

*BRAND is the sum of perceptions in the mind of each person
who has come across your Product*

The verb phrase “come across” is the key term because it refers to a general, universal interaction with a product. Many marketing professionals think that a person is entitled to refer to a Product as a brand only if he or she has bought it or made physical or eye contact with it.

The arguments against this opinion are clear:

- **“Bought”** – A person may create a brand association with a Product even if he or she has not purchased it. There are millions of people, for example, who want an iPhone but cannot afford one. Or a Mercedes car. For them, these two brands are powerful because they are part of their wish list.
- **“Touched”** or **“Met”** – The fact that you’ve never had any physical contact with a Product doesn’t mean that you are unable to develop a Brand idea of that Product. As discussed above, others’ opinions of a Product automatically generate an opinion in our own minds, one that combines with the factors that form our perceptions.

In fact, further study shows that actions such as reading about a perfume, hearing its jingle over the radio or experiencing someone else praising its wonderful vanilla scent help develop the idea of brand in the mind of any person.

So, if we talk about a Product, hear an opinion or generate a mind reflection of a TV ad that we've just seen, we start labeling that Product with an idea of a brand.

How relevant is this label to your intention of purchasing?
How does this kind of brand recognition materialize into sales, into success for the Company that owns the Product?

These are good questions that you will be answered in the following modules.

As you now see, we can state that

- a brand **is not** a product name, a logo or a slogan
- a brand **is not** a product
- a brand **is not** a trademark
- a brand **is not** an advertising or marketing campaign
- a brand **is not** a promise or a value

A brand is **NOT ONLY** made up of all the elements mentioned above.

In the following "Brands Come True" module, we will talk in detail about the Ingredients and Tools that you'll be using when communicating for your Brand.

Next, let's analyze the definition of Branding.

BRANDING is **any conscious activity** that the Company performs to try to influence this set of perceptions in people's minds.

Some say that the best branding is the kind the company carries out without trying, planning or acting upon it. Others say that simply providing Clients with a good and fair product is the only branding a company needs.

Both statements are helpful, and yet, again, they are not enough. The best and the most powerful brands are born as a result of carefully planned, conscious actions. The other contexts or examples are merely accidents.

Yes, there are people who can reach their destinations through sheer luck. The same principle applies as when talking about the lottery.

You can dream and hope that you'll win, or you can work out a plan to earn the money you need and want.

Againg, about that **try** verb:

There are a lot of professional branding consultants that provide you with guarantees, with sure, bulletproof plans to "create a brand in 7 steps."

How can you be certain that a set of actions going to be able to develop an idea in a person's mind?

For example, can I change your mind about what you think of the cream in Oreo cookies? I can certainly try to influence your opinion regarding this delicious ingredient, but I don't have sure means to achieve a psychological change in your mind about what you think of that cream.

If you are thinking about hypnosis, mass manipulation or secret manipulation techniques, then you need to know that, in addition the fact that these methods are illegal, none of them can help your business become more successful.

Why a strong brand means “more success,” “more power,” “more money”

Let's talk about each and one!

MORE SUCCESS

Although we try not to get too sentimental about running a business, we cannot say that owning a company should be cold and mathematic, because, mostly, it should not be. The strongest brands achieve success when they are able to create culture-related modifications that take into account the communities around and encourage them to adopt the Products as a way of living.

More specifically, a brand needs to have a general attitude of trying **to make life better for its consumers** and helping them achieve this goal through and through. This is a plain and simple fact.

Besides loyalty, what you get in this line of work as reward is the purest form of success in business — the success of fulfilling your Purpose.

When this Purpose adds up to nothing more than “I want to make a lot of money,” what you’ll create is a financial equation, a company that is driven by fake and emotionless actions. In this situation, brands can be created, but they will be made of flimsy cardboard instead of strong beliefs.

Which one is more likely to get broken?

MORE POWER

The goal of a Product or a Service is to make Customers trust it enough to pay for it. The Sales Talk that each Company wants to have with any potential Client has a clear aim: **We want you to buy our Product.** But why should we stop there when there is so much more to achieve, when the higher purpose is to make a mere Product become a success?

If a Client buys a Product, it doesn't mean that the Company has succeeded in transforming that Product into a relevant Brand in the Client's mind.

If it's a hot day outside and I'm in a hurry, there is a high chance that when entering a grocery store, I will buy a soda. I'm in front of the fridge and, because I'm already late for work, I grab the X brand of soda. It's not my favorite, but who cares? I'm thirsty and I'm in a hurry. I'm fulfilling a physical need, and I am not sensitive to anything in particular regarding Product X. Merely buying and drinking it doesn't mean I'm falling in love with it.

Respect, Admiration and Love (RAL)

These are the stages that a Client needs to undergo in order to develop an attitude of Loyalty towards the brand. You can say it is the evolution of a relationship that occurs only if the Product keeps or upgrades its promise of price, quality, functionality and interaction.

So, as a singular or random factor, the truth is that purchases **DO NOT create Brand Loyalty**. Only repeated and conscious purchase and awareness in interactions will earn your Brand the prize of Loyalty.

Why is Brand Loyalty so important?

Because **this** is actually the real power of a company — the loyal customers who will help you

- **protect the brand** – In the world of online interaction, you cannot always be present when attacks to your brand occur. Yes, there are very good tools that can alert you when your name pops up in a virtual universe, but, setting aside the time delay, there are online contexts for which the above virtual tools are not applicable (for example, in forums or private group talks inside social media platforms). The best guardians of your brand and, implicitly, of your business are your loyal customers.
- **distribute the brand** – These customers can become the best ambassadors you'll ever find. Their "Sales

Talk” about your Product cannot be matched. Since these customers “sell” from the heart, they create the best transfer of trust to friends and family that your Product will ever need.

- **evolve the brand** – Customers talk to you, and they want to help. They have such a valuable, complex collective creativity that they are able to predict the future of their preferences and actions...that is, if you want to know it.

MORE MONEY

And we finally get to the part that looks the most interesting to business owners. While it may be the most interesting, it is not more important than the other two accomplishments that your Product or Service should achieve: success and power.

In most cases, a brand has a financial value. It represents a financial figure simply because it can be viewed as an asset. There are brand equity procedures that are carried out by specialized companies (auditors) that are able to tell you

exactly how much money your brand is worth. However, we are not getting into these details here simply because there are complicated mathematical and financial algorithms involved.

What I want to show you is how you can actively earn money when your brand is significant, when it has and provides commercial value.

A brand encourages purchase repetition

A brand can encourage the recurrence of purchase or, in some cases, the distribution of purchase to other Products or Services of the same Brand. It helps Customers quickly decide what to buy because they have already developed certainties:

- **quality** – They know how dependable the Product is.
- **value** – They know how the Product makes them feel and they like it.
- **comfort** – Their risks decrease each time they get the confirmation that they are sticking to THAT Product they fell in love with. No surprises will arise when

consuming or using it, and this counts considerably. When you try a new chocolate with chili, you may or may not be surprised by its taste. However, you know what to expect from your favorite chocolate with chili.

Where is the money?

You'll find it in the smaller amount of money invested so as to achieve the Conversion of any Person into a Client, in the money that is not invested in a full Sales Talk, conveyed through advertising, sales effort, merchandising. For those people who are already convinced that your Product is worth buying, the investments are minimized to those required to increase retention and loyalty and to reward that loyalty, plus, of course, the investments directed towards **always keeping your promise.**

A brand is the best Competitive Advantage that you may ever need and get.

In real life, there are companies that don't like to play this "game" fairly. I think that, for some, it is second nature to try to find hacks. Patience is a virtue that not everybody

masters. There will be competitors who will do almost everything to win the battle, even stealing or copying your Product. If they put their mind to it, they now have the technical ability to duplicate your recipe, your packaging, your logo or even the shape of your Product.

There is one thing that they cannot copy or duplicate — your Brand.

The customer's idea of Brand is made up of the entire framework and mosaic of perceptions. It is these that will help develop some very important attitudes towards your Product: Respect, Admiration and Love. Competitors cannot duplicate these feelings or transfer them to their Product the same way they can copy your Packaging, for example. These attitudes represent the foundation that you built together with your Client. They are a statement of the quality you promote, of your professionalism, attitude, personality, tonality or anything that else that makes you one of a kind. For these qualities, people will seek you out; they will pay attention to details and will not be easily misled

by copycats. Can someone trick you into buying a Product like “Abibas” tennis shoes?

Where is the money?”

Preventing the loss of Customers and Market Share to “similar” Products is the true way to gain money, in as much as you are the one benefiting from the sales of your Product, instead of a seemingly identical Product, the copycat of a competitor.

A brand is the best Protection against Reputation breakers

After you have invested considerably in generating the right tools for your brand, in advertising and marketing campaigns, after you have put a lot of effort in convincing people to buy your Product for reasons aside from the price, **you cannot afford** to allow others demolish your reputation.

There are two possible contexts in which this can happen.

- **Unfair criticism** – Some companies use this kind of “dirty communication” technique, meant to create mistrust in the perception of your Clients.
- **Unfortunate accidents** – People who have had bad luck using your Product may spread this rumor with the intention of generalizing their negative experiences.

In most cases, your PR team can protect you with a well-drafted, communication-based plan of actions. The question is what happens when you don't know these situations are occurring or when it is beyond your power to manage the situation on your own.

Where is the money?

When we talked about how a brand can bring you “more power,” we talked about the loyal Customers that can protect your brand.

In this type of situation, their voluntary opinions will be your defense, the strategy that can defuse any conflict.

The money that you gained in the absence of huge investments will help you in case such scenarios escalate to the point that they start to ruin your reputation.

Without a good reputation, you lose trust; without trust, you lose Clients; without Clients, you cannot have Sales; etc.

Now, do you understand the connection between branding and money?

A brand is the result of a planned process

Brands seldom happen by chance. Indeed, there are now vehicles (especially in the online universe) that are able to transform a Product into an overnight brand. I call these instances, and not brands.

Example: In 2009, Susan Boyle, a participant of Britain's Got Talent, became an international brand overnight. In the first 24 hours after her first televised performance, she reached over 20 million views on YouTube (the same video has now over 130 million views). That is an incredible reach. From this, she gained over 5 million instant admirers and over 1 million instant fans. This is huge even for our present society.

What new media calls "going viral" can produce brands of this kind, but you have to know that the chances of this happening are slimmer than the chances of winning the

lottery. As an entrepreneur or business owner, you cannot afford to dream of such “accomplishments.” You cannot make a strategy based on luck, just as you shouldn’t expect any explosive results just because you think the Product you’re selling is the best.

The best Products are not necessarily the best top sales Products.

If you want to have a strong brand, you need to build it. With this advice, I am encouraging you to take branding activities as seriously as possible. Please bear in mind that this does not imply that you have to do all the branding yourself — it is impossible to get results without true branding professionals — but merely that you have to understand what needs to happen in order for you to own, maintain and evolve a brand. It is mandatory for you to understand that branding should be a continuous priority (no matter what your business) and that money, energy, human resources and patience need to be invested into this constant “breathing” process — this is what branding does for your company.

The Ingredients that will make your brand healthier

Module Introduction

THANK YOU!

“Again?” you may ask.

Yes, I have to say it again even if I may be exaggerating. I really appreciate your buying the “Brands Come True” books and that you think it is worth your while. The most important aspect of this decision is not that you’ve purchased this book - course, but your decision to manage your brand. This represents a valuable action for you and your Company.

In fact, this decision is the first and most important ingredient in your branding strategy. The fact that you have stated:

“I need branding so that my company will grow healthy.”

In the next lessons, we will identify all the aspects you need in order to start thinking about a personalized and unique branding strategy for you. The purpose of these lessons, and of these modules in general, is not to teach you how to act as a branding professional but to understand

- what branding means
- how to control your brand and all required branding strategies
- how to manage the implementation and evolution of your brand

So, again, you will not learn how to create logos, but you will find out how important they are and learn how to communicate exactly what you need for your logo, not in terms of appearance, but in terms of business vision, personality and tonality.

We will discover together how important your mindset is as a business owner and how your perspective is implemented in your Products, so that your mentality translates to assets for your company, employees and, finally, your customers.

At the end of this module, you will have a clear checklist of branding solutions that you can tailor to include everything you decide is suitable for your business. I won't use templates but instead examples and simple principles you can easily apply to your own business, so that you can

- understand your **business vision** as part of a general business model.
- identify a clear potential **unique selling proposition** (USP) for your Product.
- know which **tools** you will need for your business (not only for branding purposes).

In addition, in all these modules, we will talk about the right business models and share a lot of tips and tricks that you need to have in mind during your career as a business owner or entrepreneur.

The owner's mindset and vision

Choose the right business for you, not for your family or friends.

If there is one thing that is certain, it is that the world is full of opportunities... for others. The biggest battle you will have when deciding on the nature of your business will be the one you fight with yourself, your thoughts, your personality, your character and with what is it exactly that your mind has set itself on doing.

There are indeed business owners out there who are born to handle **any type of business**, no matter the line of business. Unfortunately, these people are very hard to find. There is a high chance that we'll never meet one during our lifetimes. So, we should start bearing in mind that no one is such a brilliant entrepreneur.

What can we do about it?

What can you do in order to find the right business for yourself?

The answer is simple: you need to look deep inside yourself and try to find those signs that will give you insight into choosing the right business. You need to assemble and transcribe these insights, first, into thoughts and, ultimately, into decisions.

It really doesn't matter that there's an opportunity for opening a pastry shop on your street. The fact that there are none in a range of five blocks does not translate into the sign of an opportunity. The reason for this is that, first of all, you're not a baker, and you don't want to be a baker, you just smile at the idea of seeing an opportunity and thinking it may offer a chance make an easy buck.

It is not really relevant that nowadays e-commerce sites are popular. Do you find them interesting? Have you dreamed about creating such websites? Could you become an

expert? Do you feel like investing two hours each day, with the risk of spending every day of your life learning about them?

If you are able to learn something from scratch, then that's a different matter. Yes, these are opportunities that may be pursued.

There are also fake opportunities that you hear are real moneymakers in other countries. "I know a guy who opened a candy store in Quebec, Canada. He makes \$10,000 a day." This doesn't mean that you should open one in Dallas, Texas.

All your experience as a business owner should start from answering three basic questions:

- 1. What do you like to do?*
- 2. What are you good at?*
- 3. How can your work really improve the life of your Customers more than your competitors' work does?*

85% of the businesses that start up by identifying these three insights triple their chances at becoming successful. The reason why this happens is, again, a simple one:

When you fulfill your real-life expectations, you achieve the needed mindset that helps you be a good business owner.

As you may notice, it's not a question of money when deciding what you should do business-wise. Not that money is not important, but you increase your chances of failure if you make such decisions starting from "how much money do I need?" Earning a quick buck is a poor and short-term motivation. Owning a business involves a great deal of efforts and restraints that may turn into a very stressful situation for you. Repeatedly. On one hand, in extreme situations, the desire (or actual need) to make money can keep you determined to do something that you don't like or are not good at. On the other hand, in normal, given situations, almost no one can carry on with their business while having such an internal battle. We, as people, are simply not capable of doing that voluntarily, of resisting the conflicting wish for money while hating what we do for a living.

Let's also not forget that, in order to have a good business, you nevertheless need the money to invest in getting it started. Your sole motivation as a business owner is the most powerful asset your business has, and that is because you are its most reliable engine, the most devoted and dedicated employee of your own company. This motivation can only be earned if you do what you love and so develop your own company for the right reasons.

The conclusion here is for you not to let yourself be misled by that type of arithmetic in which you say to yourself, "I buy something with one dollar and I sell it for four, and this way I will become an overnight billionaire." Don't mind others, only yourself. You are the one that needs to build a new World (yours) in which you will be investing all your Life. Think it through and you will not be disappointed.

"I may not be the best, but i could become the best."

This is what you should tell yourself when starting a business. If you've already begun the journey, you should tell it to yourself starting this moment.

It is not necessarily a motivational sentence, but more of a life meaning put down in black and white. No one can argue with your saying to yourself, even if not in a loud voice, that **YOU COULD BE THE BEST** in your line of business.

Becoming the best in a certain line of work doesn't require benchmarks or unbeatable scientific data. You don't necessarily need certificates or diplomas. What it takes is a continuous self-learning process and a strong daily desire to discover and notice wonderful things in your business, in your job. This means you need to make things happen, fight to overcome problems and accept challenges.

It is true that just saying it will not make it happen. It is an ongoing process that means investing energy in a pleasant way. It is not about hard work. It is about working with pleasure and passion.

Remember that you have chosen to build the business that you LOVE, the business that you are GOOD at. Improving it on a daily basis it is not an effort, but an adventure. You cannot be a loser when you learn something new with every challenge that you overcome. Even if you fail, what you've already learned today will help you rise higher tomorrow.

It is a fantastic journey. It really is!

By defining the itinerary and destinations, you are actually defining the business **VISION.** Its foundation resides in your desire, expectation and drive to become the best in your area of expertise. Still, it helps a lot if you define it further along its path to success, for yourself and not for the sake of others.

It really helps to have a direction; it helps to know towards which first crossing line you are working your way. After you define it, it will be much easier to concentrate your effort simply because you'll have a personal statement that validates your strive, efforts and determination.

For example, if you have a winery as a business, a possible business vision statement will look something like:

"Drinking wine is the most creative, proven method of bonding with the people you love. We want to provide you with the best option in wine so that you can properly interact with those dear to you."

Yes, people are more accustomed to associating wine with food. We will change this perspective. We'll teach everybody how to associate our wine with states of mind, feelings and emotions."

Besides the simplicity of the affirmation that communicates exactly what the business owner of such a winery wants to achieve perception-wise, the company also gains a great tool that will help make a lot of business decisions, especially from the operational, branding and marketing areas of expertise.

Does this new wine Product that my team suggests investing in fit my vision, and will it manage to change my customers' mentality?

Does this branding action help my business accomplish my vision statement?

Does this marketing investment get me closer to what I want as a business? How does this happen?

Its highness, the Product!

It is the most important aspect of the business. It is the center of your Business Universe, the Sun around which everything gravitates:

- **The Clients** – You will not draw them to you without a good Product.
- **The Money** – You will not get it if you are not able to sell a good Product to Clients.
- **Power and Success** – There are well-known cases in which well-crafted and professionally managed Products have huge social impacts in changing Cultures.
- **The branding activities** – It doesn't make sense to employ them if you have a poorly created Product. You could invest in branding, but the effect would be

equal to blowing air in a balloon; there will be no reliable consistency. It will look attractive for a while, but when the balloon explodes, you will have nothing but air.

Against all initial thinking process —

The product **doesn't** need to be perfect.

It needs to be able to get there.

IT NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO BE THE BEST!

As you will work to be the best in your trade, so will your Product. Why would you choose to build a business around a Product that doesn't have the potential to be the best of its kind on the market?

As a business owner, you must understand that you have to start selling your Product as soon as possible and do so without losing the quality element. Again, your Product may not be perfect in the beginning, but all it needs is to be better than or at least of the same

perceived quality as whatever the competitors have on the market.

Struggling to make your Product perfect from the beginning (as a small business or as a start-up) means:

- **That you'll have more costs** in the development process.
- **That you'll lose more time**, which brings even more costs for you and your business.
- **That you may be too late.** The competitors don't stand still, waiting for your Product; they are also improving. Your "better feature" may already be outdated when you launch yours.

So, the Product itself doesn't need to be perfect, but

the process behind it needs to be
bulletproof.

This is something that you cannot rush. And if you do, it will cost you.

It has to do with your basic business model, which, actually, is what you need to have in mind. It has to do with the logic

behind making the Product. It is very simple and easy to manage.

What is directly related to the Product is the

VALUE PROPOSITION

Why should anyone buy YOUR Product and not a similar one from a company other than yours?

Don't mind the vague business term. The answer to "What is your Product's value proposition?" is simple, and, at some point, it will be transformed into a Unique Selling Proposition.

At this point you have to prove to yourself that you have something SPECIAL. Can you create it? Can you find it? Here is where the IDEA comes into action.

Don't worry, it is something simple to create. It will help you differentiate. It will help you stand out in a positive fashion.

Write down all the steps, from A to Z, that need to be accomplished so that you can create the Product. What feature can you improve in order to make it better, much

better? Can you modify some steps? Will they, in turn, improve the end Product?

If you are just repeating the steps that your competitors have developed, then you will certainly have a similar Product. It is not wrong to start with that.

Will you then improve the selling process, the client's experience with the Product? What will be the ace up your sleeve?

It must be something that you already have in mind.

If you haven't found it yet, don't worry. Keep looking and looking until you find it somewhere in your mental notes .

Here are the most common practices for finding that Unique Selling Proposition (USP):

- **"My product is cheaper."** – You don't want clients to buy your Product only because you have a lower price offer, so you should avoid this kind of promise. Why? Because these new customers are going to be the ones who leave you for the same reason they came, the first chance they get.

- **"My product is made of..."** – Bringing into discussion special or unconventional ingredients from the recipe can help your Product stand alone for a short period of time. But then what happens when another of your competitors also uses your "special" ingredient? Can you keep it a secret? If so, then you have a good USP start.
- **"My product is better"** – How can you prove this without having someone buy it? "You have to trust me" doesn't always work as an answer.

On the same page, another principle that will guide you towards savvy business decisions is the idea that you shouldn't create a slogan. Don't issue a positioning statement like "for the hungry people who want good food."

You could think of your Value Proposition as a print ad or a short letter to a potential Customer. Write it sincerely, with a clear manner and interesting layout, and be clear about the message you are sending to your customer. You should even start with a Headline.

For a Restaurant the example may look like this:

Dine with us and postpone traveling to Rome.

We brought an Italian chef to Chicago, just for you.

How many of you have actually tried traditional pasta carbonara? Not from a can or semi-processed, but from the hands of a genuine chef from Italy. Come meet our chef Giovanni, an Italian who is so Italian that he brings and makes his own pasta and only uses tomatoes and olive oil from Italy.

Well? How simple is that?

What did you find out, as a potential customer, by reading the above value proposition statement?

You now know that the Restaurant that we are using in the example is a traditional Italian one. This is the promise it offers to you as a reader: Italian cuisine with traditional, handpicked ingredients.

Let's go further and visualize the simple business model that you will apply.

What are your

KEY RESOURCES AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

that hide backstage when developing the Product?

- Do you have control over every aspect?
- What is your backup plan when a primary key activity or resource is blocked?

The KEY RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES are directly linked with

KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS .

For example:

A RESTAURANT –

One part of the KEY ACTIVITIES is related to the chef's recipes, which, overall, comprise elements related to

- **Ingredients** – what needs to be cooked so that the right “Product” exists: the menu of the restaurant.
- **Process** – steps and know-how that take you from raw ingredients to wonderful and delicious dishes.

- **Logistics** – the tools you need (knives, pots, water for utilities and cleaning, physical rented space, heat, mixers, ovens, etc.)

All these are connected to:

- **People** – the human resources that, along with some other logistical aspects, are part of the **KEY RESOURCES**.

Also, other parts of the KEY ACTIVITIES that need to be included are accounting costs (invoicing, taxes, etc.), marketing and branding and perhaps “eventing” (a special set of services offered for clients who would like to have themed parties in your restaurant).

When you analyze everything as a whole, you will have a list of elements that allow or block the functionality of the Restaurant. So you will realize that your kitchen cannot work without the **SUPPLIERS** providing the Ingredients.

So:

1. Have we received a price offer for all the ingredients from the suppliers? Do we have at least one backup

for each supplier? What if the dairy delivery truck has an accident and we don't get this merchandise, a part of our ingredients? What do we do? Do we shut down the restaurant for that day?

2. Do we have access to the indispensable utilities and domestic facilities (gas, electricity, water and garbage)?
3. Is everyone present in the Kitchen? The chef, the soup maker, the waiters, etc.? If someone is missing unexpectedly, can we replace him? Who is the backup for each KEY HUMAN RESOURCE?
4. Do we know how to make the food? Have we practiced enough? Can we produce and deliver the same quality each time?

So, in simple terms, we have now set the context of PRODUCTION. We can now make the Product.

Next we have to define the **VALUE PROPOSITION** of the Product.

For this, you need, as a business owner, to calculate the exact ***PRODUCTION COSTS***. You will be surprised by

how many managers don't have ALL costs distinctively identified. There are many that will only calculate costs of ingredients, utilities and rent.

How can your business end up helping you if there is no coverage of all production costs and possibly no profit in the end?

You cannot set a correct, profitable price for your product without identifying all the production costs.

In terms of costs, you need to make a difference between

- **INITIAL INVESTMENTS COST** – This includes the costs of building the restaurant, catering cars, initial branding (naming, logo, graphic design for menus and collaterals, website, launching the advertising segment and creating and practicing the menu.) This includes the kitchen testing and plating procedures — what costs are included with respect to the dish and table arrangements, to training the waiters if necessary, etc.? Bear in mind that this list may possibly extend to other compulsory initial expenses.

- **MONTHLY AND RECURRENT COSTS** – These include salaries, rent, utilities, laundry services (for uniforms, table clothing, napkins), branding activities (from marketing to PR, from social media to website content, from advertising to publicity stunts) and unexpected costs (broken dishes or glasses, unsatisfied customers that refuse to pay, the rice cooker that short-circuited, etc.).
- **INGREDIENTS COSTS/ PRODUCTION COSTS** – These are for raw ingredients and spices, including everything that you cook (to which you add value by processing) and the other Products that you simply re-sell (like wines, bread, dairy products).

When identifying the right price, you need to have all three in mind.

On one hand, the **INITIAL INVESTMENT COSTS** can be considered a percentage of the profit, even in the long run. On the other hand, you need to have **ALL** the **MONTHLY AND RECURRENT COSTS** covered on a monthly basis. To all these, add the **COSTS OF INGREDIENTS**.

In order to be able to integrate the monthly costs into the price, you will perhaps need to set a sales projection and set your target accordingly. How many plates of pasta carbonara do we need to sell at this price so that we break even? Breaking even means having an income that will cover all the costs without generating any profit; you want this to be the worst-case scenario.

Then set an average target per day. What number do you come up with? If it's a huge one, which you know you cannot meet, perhaps you need to increase the unit price so that the monthly target for plates can decrease.

This is the main idea of the do-it-yourself method. If you want an exact mathematic formula with suggested trade margins anchored in geographical case studies, amortization, etc., then you may need the help of someone who specializes in such aspects of the business. Even then, subjective adjustments require your consideration.

After calculating the **PRICE** of your Product, you need to answer yet another question:

Will my customers PAY this Price?

Perhaps you need to ask around, to see how your competitors with similar products are managing the price issue.

If you don't find any similar grounds for comparison within the market, then perhaps you need to find an answer to the following question:

How can I make my customers PAY this Price?

Most often, the solution is to achieving this through well-thought out communication, with a good branding strategy and coherent marketing.

So, let's quickly recap. We have:

- A **PRODUCT** that we love making and that we are also good at making. The **PRODUCT** also has is the potential to be THE BEST on the market, and, at the same time, has a unique trait that makes it different, different in a good way.

- We've stated the **VALUE PROPOSITION** that will present our Product to the potential customers. (We will use this value proposition to generate communication messages while advertising our Products.)
- We have identified which of our **KEY ELEMENTS** are included in developing the Product: **KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES, KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS.**
- We've found out what the **COSTS** are and how to translate them roughly into what needs to be a fair **PRICE** for both you and your customers.

Getting the Product ready to walk out the door

In this lesson, we will cover the following:

- Preparing the Product outside production development, from a verbal and visual point of view. Here, we will mention the strategic aspects of the **tools** that you'll need in order to be able to launch a Product. (These will be detailed in the 3rd **"Brands Come True" Module**.)
- Defining the customer segments and developing a relationship with them.
- We will talk about channels of distributions, about how to get the Product to our customers.
- And finally, we'll talk about how to validate the revenue streams. This is one of the most important aspects of the business: how and when does money come back to you?

So, lets start!

Naming the Product

Most business owners, when first faced with this need, think they can do it on their own. One will probably wonder: what's so hard about giving a name to your own Product?

Well, naming is one of the most complex creative processes that your Product will ever need.

As an incentive, let's start with the fact that a good name will decrease your advertising costs and the need to create the right awareness around your Product by about 30%. Although a Product with a poorly chosen name can still be communicated so that people will know it and seek it in the stores, this will ultimately cost you more. When naming a Product, as a basic strategic principle, you also need to take into consideration the creative tools that will come after this process:

- Tagline
- Communication direction
- Creative idea

- Creative implementation

Also:

- Positioning
- Targeted public

To these you add value proposition and business vision, and all these versatile factors need to have an effect on the naming process.

Naming increases the value of the Product tremendously when the name is supported by or created on a pillar of uniqueness. Nowadays, this uniqueness is harder to accomplish, even within a specific line of business. (For example, there are 84 magazines named *Luxury* that are not owned by the same publisher.) Even so, you need this uniqueness because it's a differential factor and also a legal requirement. As much as you consider it fit and perfect for your Product, you cannot use the name "Fanta" because that is already trademarked (meaning that you are legally bound not to use it). If we do find the uniqueness ingredient, we need to take care of the tonality and the personality that gets blended into the creation of the name.

A toy for children will be hard to sell under a name like “Deoxyribonucleic.” Unless it suits the specific niche, this name, which is even hard to pronounce out loud, is likely to take down your Product.

If you are still in the mood and feeling courageous about taking a shot at creating your own name, good luck! You'll need it.

There are several scenarios to consider when talking about naming. They are all related to the business strategy and the selling process that you are undertaking.

NAMING THE COMPANY

There are cases in which companies that provide very specific services or companies that sell one kind of Product bear the same name as their one Product or service that is being sold. This is the one item singled out in the sales talk. This will be the trust mark, the certificate of quality, the name that will be sought out in the processes to follow and the communication means of promotion. So, in a manner of speaking, the Products that are being sold and the services

that are being provided have an umbrella sheltering them: the name of the company.

NAMING THE PRODUCT

This is needed when your company is selling Products that need to stand alone, perhaps in the scenario that your Products are being sold through resellers distributing outside company reach. In these cases, the Product name (especially in retail) is the power tool. It is the one element in which you need to invest a lot of effort so that consumers build up the needed awareness, which ends up generating customer feelings towards the Product. The customer associates the Product with the name, and this becomes one of the main reasons for purchase. Again, naming a Product makes sense when you have Products addressing different targets (children, teens, adults or seniors, for example), so you'll have different positioning and communication strategies.

USING A MIX OF NAMES

Some companies use the COMPANY NAME as an additional endorser for the PRODUCT NAME. So you may have “**Activia** - A Dannon product” and “**Dannon** Yogurt.”

Creating the tagline

A Product may need a tagline or slogan (aside from the company's), a tagline in which you, as the business and Product owner, can embed the unique selling proposition (USP). For example, USP based on popularity, like “the toothpaste most appreciated by dentists,” will help differentiate your Product, as long as it's true and scientifically documented.

Or other taglines can be inspired by

- Special ingredients inside the recipe: *“Salties – the biscuits with Himalayan salt.”*
- Success stories: *“Top selling product in 2014.”*
- Star endorsement: *“This product is recommended by Clint Eastwood.”*

- Creativity: those taglines that make a call-to-action or fit a creative campaign, like *"Have a break, have a Kit Kat."*

Creating the logo

As we already discussed in the 1st **"Brands Come True"** Module when talking about what Brand and Branding really mean, logos are very powerful visual statements that stick to the Consumer's mind simply because we, as humans, are better at connecting feelings with images.

We are people who think in images, and all our memories are stronger and more vivid if they are linked to images.

This is why people think that brands mean logos and vice versa. This is NOT true! Logos simply help create an enhanced and communicative mosaic of perceptions, which ends up helping a person generate the idea of a specific brand related to a specific Company or Product.

Again, we may have different instances of needs for logos when considering both our Company and our Product.

As in the naming process, you have to decide what helps you sell better. What is your strategy?

In the majority of cases, you will need both, or at least a visual identity set (a logo and others that apply to it).

So, if your Product needs its own Logo, don't forget to align it with the tonality of the Name (if the name is playful, then that is what the logo should also convey), with the use of the communication direction and with the creative idea (the story that sets up the value proposition of your Product).

As in the case of naming and all the other creative tools that you'll be employing, you should hire professionals to have the job properly and professionally done. You are not spending money, but investing it. Choosing to do it yourself or using cheap solutions will only cause you more expenses in the long run. Fixing these items will triple the cost that you would have paid if you had done everything by following the right steps from the start.

Creating the packaging

I would suggest that you create the packaging together with the logo and as part of the creative process of communication. If you have a good and creative idea for a message, you can implement it on the packaging. It needs to make sense for your Product, but, again, you should decide upon it by making proper use of the Ingredients already created, your Business Vision and the Value Proposition. If the answer to “Can it help me achieve them?” is “Yes!,” then do it. Think of the packaging not only as a visual identity application of the logo, but also as a communication platform on which your creative story rests.

The Sales Talk

There are an incredible number of business owners that miss this very important tool. Many don't know that they need it, and a few minimize it to a simple flyer.

Imagine that you have in front of you the most patient Potential Client, a person who has all the time in the world to listen to all your arguments.

What would you tell him? Better yet, what would you write to him?

Start writing a Sales Letter

You should take a break from anything else and write this patient customer a long letter that covers the following:

- How you arrived at selling this Product. Who inspired you? How did you fall in love with making it?
- How many years you worked until you found a breakthrough ingredient or method. What is that breakthrough; what's your secret? (Describe it in general words, don't give it away!)
- Details about ingredients and how you know a Product like yours is of the Best Quality. Teach your Customers how to validate your Quality and how to check for that with your Competitors' Products.

Example: Imagine you are selling a perfume called "Sugar Pop." You would like your customers,

especially the loyal ones, those who keep on buying it year after year, to know how to identify the real one from any fake, wouldn't you? Teach your customers how to identify the real deal, how to recognize the bottle and test the label, how the stopper should look, etc.

- What do you want to change in the industry? The business vision overall?
- Why should someone buy your Product? (Make a detailed "reason-why" derived from the Value Proposition statement of the Product.)

NOTE: See how everything adds up together?

- Who's the team behind it? Who are those working to make you achieve and respect your promises?

Introducing your team members to your customers can build a trustful relationship, especially if you use pictures or videos of your team, if you describe their portfolios, experience in the field, passion, know-how and to what extent and in what way they care and deliver this care to every person who buys and uses the Product.

- Anything else that you know about the Product and that you think is important for the Client to know.

Don't worry if you are not a good copywriter. The most important aspect of your letter is the info. There are specialists who are able to make it sound good and appealing; don't stress yourself with this aspect. This letter will be the creed and essence of all sales materials created by professionals, from the final Sales Talk material (for internal use only) to Company Brochures, Product Trifolds and Website content.

Creating the Creative Message and Content

communicated in the Sales Talk

The Sales Talk that you've just created is one of the most important materials that you create as a business owner. It is both a strategic tool that continuously urges you to keep searching for innovation within your company and one of the most important brief items that your creative agency will need. This sales talk will need to be TRANSLATED to the World using strategic creative communication. This process is not only about using the right copywriting or words that relate to your targeted audience. It is also about creating the right state of mind for people, about using personality

and tonality to instill feelings in the Customers, so that they will not only give you their undivided attention, but also look for you on the shelves, make a positive analysis and then buy and, in the end, admire, respect and fall in love with your Product.

The information that encourages the Customer to do all that (something that goes above and beyond buying the Product) then needs to be MAGICALLY transformed.

It's the same as

- A gifted dancer transforming ordinary choreography to make it look like an absolutely breathtaking phenomenon.
- A photographer turning a scene into an immortal instant, and thus turning the people looking at it into more than witnesses by capturing the emotions and expressions that an audience might miss.
- A singer singing a song about something ordinary, like, for example, time, who succeeds in making your heart tremble and your eyes shed tears.

Within these creative agencies, there are people who do exactly that. They will take your Sales Talk and make it warm, incandescent, funny or loveable. They will put magic into it.

Can you do it by yourself?

No one can tell you that you cannot do it.

In fact, the question you should ask yourself should be

Can you do it better than the professionals?

Then, the answer is definitely "No!" You cannot do it better.

It would be like you witnessing the funniest moment of your life, but, since you are not a professional comedian, when you tell other people about it, they will not find it nearly as funny as you did. No one will get the joke; no one will laugh but you.

Let Jerry Seinfeld tell the same story, and he will do make a 10-million-dollar show out of it! In the creative business there are a lot of "Jerry Seinfelds." You just need to find them, trust them and allow them to help you.

Creating the Product Universe

where People are comfortable with you and feel the urge to come "visit" you

Who will talk about your Product?

You have sales representatives that need to be trained in order to be able to cover at least all the aspects in Sales Talk. They need to be inspired, to pursue your business vision and to get it across to the others within sales meetings.

Perhaps you will always be the best sales person of your Company, but it is important to have help in this area.

Where you will be speaking about the Product? Where will you connect with your Customers?

On the company's website?

Do you need a separate Product website?

Will you be using a special online platform (for example, an e-commerce system)?

Does a social network fit your needs?

Do you need a Showroom?

Will you be able to have your own display setting in the locations where your Product is sold / resold?

How will you talk to the Customers? What will you use?

What is the creative message?

Which media vehicle will you use? How will you implement this message on each media vehicle you have decided to use? What will the TV spot look like? How will you implement your message on Radio, in print Ads and in online web banners?

Will you need Point Of Sales Materials (P.O.S.M. – brochures, flyers, catalogues, product specs flyer, folders)?

All these questions will have their answer in the tools needed to launch or to “move” your brand. In this module, we are talking about the INGREDIENTS you need in order to start making use of the specially tailored branding activities. We are identifying the needs, but we are also preparing the ground to CREATE THE TOOLS using these

INGREDIENTS and the business model that you've decided on and built.

A lot of branding and marketing specialists will ask you "What do you need?," and then they'll give you what they think you need. A better way of interacting and profiting from the help of such professionals would be for you to identify the INGREDIENTS that would help your agency create the right TOOLS for YOUR PRODUCT.

That is why in this module we are talking about general business aspects, because without having a clear understanding of them, we would not have explained what happens in terms of branding, and we, as business owners, do not want to go around walking blindfolded.

How will an agency be able to give you the right CREATIVE TOOLS when you don't have a VISION statement? They will guess.

How can they give you a communication strategy if you don't tell them what your Product's VALUE proposition is? Will they be able to figure it out somehow?

How can they even make a brochure if they don't know what the Sales Talks looks like? They will guess some more.

If your business were a car, then branding and marketing activities would be the gas that would allow the car to move around to where people walk by and buy your Products.

The best branding strategy is created not when the car is ready, but when the OWNER is drawing the blueprint of that Car.

So, let's have a short recap.

- In the previous lesson:
 - We have talked about how to manage to bring to life a **PRODUCT** that has the potential to be the best on the market.
 - We've talked about how important and simple it is to create the **VALUE PROPOSITION** of your business journey.
 - We continued to identify essential **INGREDIENTS**, and we made clear the importance of being aware of your **KEY ELEMENTS** in the process of making the Product.

- We discussed how to identify all the **COSTS** that must be considered when setting the correct **PRICE** for your Product.
- Now that we have these things figured out, in this 3rd lesson, we took the opportunity to talk a little bit about the tools that we need in order to get the PRODUCT out into the world. We've stated a short TO DO list of what tools you need to provide for your Product and why:
 - The Naming process
 - The Logo process
 - The Packaging of the Product
 - Writing down the Sales Talk
 - Translating it creatively using a creative message tone and similarly creative content
 - Figuring out and building up the Universes where you interact with your Customers: the company's website, a product microsite, showrooms, displays and whatever support materials you may need

All this is so that the client will not only BUY, but also admire, respect and fall in love with the Product.

Next, we will talk about customer segments, creative messages and the media vehicles used to reach them. Business-wise, we'll also talk about distribution channels and revenue streams generated by your Product, the Experience that the Client has with the Product, and the actions or contexts employed after the selling process.

Introducing the Product to the World

We are almost ready to start developing the TOOLS and getting the Product ready to generate sales, emotions and feelings. First, we need to analyze the outer context within our line of business. What happens with your Product outside the company?

Second, we need to figure out who to talk to. Following the business model that we started to draw together, we are about to talk about client segments, which, in terms of decision and data, need to be taken into consideration when generating communication and creative tools.

The Client Segments

As much as we dream about it, we can seldom, if ever, address ALL the Public. Even in the case of a Product like

Bottled Water, there are elements that influence the way we communicate and the People to whom we are communicating and at whom we are aiming our sales tools, including the naming, the logo and bottle packaging, but also the price and the place (store) where the Product is found. All these revolve around and are based on the Clients that we want.

There are a few possible questions that will help you out:

1. Who do you want to sell to?

The answer to this question is based on your own experience in the field. Your instinct, your wishes for the business and certain given, objective conditions (geographic, social or economic contexts) may also play a part and will ultimately influence your opinion.

2. Who you should try to sell to?

If you want to find this out, then you should have early, predictive market research and a specialist to tell you to whom and in what way to address your targeted customer, based on data that is gathered from your market segment and from real-life perceptions, preferences and desires. Specialists will

analyze competitors, make in-depth observations of the market, try to predict future trends based on current and historical behaviors of Consumers, and analyze and correlate data with current political and social contexts, like the state of the economy and the average income of the market segment that you're addressing. They can also perform on-site surveys of what people want, how they want it and how much are they willing to pay for it and provide more interesting information regarding the informational flow and the market context in which you're bringing the Product. Finally, they will suggest a Consumer Profile to whom you should address both communication and the sales process. Even though this sounds *very* scientific, it will prove to be worthwhile.

3. Who is buying your Product?

Are you ready to face the facts? Prepare to be baffled. There are a lot of cases in which the Public (generally speaking) has a mind of its own, giving itself a very unpredictable character. There have been cases in which a low quality product with a low

income target was embraced by a totally different segment of Customers (Customers with University degrees and medium or high incomes, in this particular example) just because the Communication and the Creative Message was funny and appealing, even though (as well as because) the Product was targeted to a different, specific Public.

Because of this, you need to be prepared for and open to message alterations, to adapting the distribution and selling process to any condition that may arise, if this is in accordance with the business vision. Remember, it is important not only to sell your Product, but to meet your expected business vision as well.

When choosing Client Segments there are two basic approaches:

- Choosing a wide segment
 - **POSITIVES:** You will address a larger number of People, so, generally speaking, you will have fewer criteria to meet in order for the Product

to be sold to Customers. This can mean more chances for you to sell your Products and a lot more chances for your Product to meet a general existing need.

- **NEGATIVES:** **First** of all, you will find yourself crossing paths with a higher number of Competitors. You have to tackle this kind of problem on different grounds and promote the Product better than them. You have to be very convincing because the person you are selling and talking to has a lot more options to pick from. More arguments will be needed in order to set yourself apart. **Second**, the wide public offers you fewer clues about the people you are addressing. It doesn't allow you to be specific because the segment is wide. You need to come up with a message that is both general and plain, so that it can represent as many people as possible. **Third**, this will also mean that it will be hard for you to gain a market share, to become a market leader and to win the loyalty of your

consumers.

Fourth, if you want as many people as possible to buy your Product, you will need to be physically present everywhere you can, so as to have this factor covered. You will need to have a wide distribution network that will eat a lot of stock. This network will block the flow of money, extending the goal from “selling the Product” to “actually receiving the Money,” because you’ll have a lot of resellers as channels of distribution.

Fifth, additional competition and resellers will lower your profit margins. In this way, you will end up earning less per Product sold, with the possible compensation that you will have a larger volume of purchases.

- Choosing a narrow segmentation

- **POSITIVES:** In this case, the market is most likely not crowded, since by narrowing your Public projection, you are adding criteria that people will match in order to have a need for

your Product. The first advantage of choosing a niche is that you are part of the few (or the only one) offering a specific Product for a specific Public. This makes it easier for you to

- **sell faster** – because you know exactly to whom you are speaking. (For example, Mercedes is addressing a Luxury target market — large income, intellectual, sensitive to public image, etc.)
- **gain a market share more quickly** – The “playground” you are on has fewer competitors than the widespread, general distribution one.
- **communicate more accurately and more efficiently** – You know who you are talking to, so you can easily adapt your tone of voice and adjust the personality of your Product to better reflect what the Potential Client expects.

Other advantages include the fact that people are more willing to go looking for you, to come

visit you even if you are not in mainstream retail. (You will be able to build a distribution network without using selling points such as Walmart.) They will want to have direct access to you, to hear your story from you. This means a higher profit range, easy access to money generated by sales (you won't have intermediaries) and a higher probability of igniting loyalty for the brand. (People will appreciate the direct contact, the originality of the niche Product, the communication stream created especially for them; they will feel respected.)

Finally, having a niche Product is more suited to the idea of being the best in a business simply because the candidates are fewer.

o NEGATIVES

The number of people who need your niche Product will be considerably lower. This may decrease your chances of selling your Product (although this factor may be compensated for by the larger profit margin). Nowadays, from a

strategic point of view, this drawback can be counter-attacked with the use of worldwide communication environments, websites and social media platforms, if the Product is or can be suited for covering large geographical distances.

Which one is the best way? Nobody knows, other than you. There is success on either side. You can even use both ways by having, on one hand, a Product addressing a general, wide segment of people and, on the other hand, a related Product that addresses a niche (for example, the difference between Regular and High End products). You can have multiple targets depending on regions and economic and social contexts.

Your Product and the way you differentiate it within the market will end up telling you what to decide.

You should also listen to what the Price has to say about your Product. How many people can afford it? If you sell pieces of rock from the Moon, there will be a large interest in them, but how many people are able to pay the price that

covers all the costs of your trip to the Moon and back to Earth?

IMPORTANT

After you designate a Public to whom you are selling your Product, you must remember that this needs to be reflected in the tools supporting the Product, in the naming, logo, packaging, branding strategy and creative and strategic communication. Everything needs to be in tune with both your vision and your target.

What we are setting up now are the INGREDIENTS needed to execute and manufacture those TOOLS that we will look at in detail in the following “Brands Come True” Module.

The Channels of Distribution

In business, when in doubt, try to think logically. Don't seek stories similar to yours. They might help tell you, but the story they tell can never be exactly that of someone who was or might have been in your shoes. That's impossible. No one can have the same ingredients or contexts as you. Their

story of success or failure comes from a unique key decision that is different from yours. Acquire information from everywhere and build your experience on the experience and actions of others, but always ADJUST everything to your own unique story. Don't take ingredients, or tools, for that matter, from anyone else and copy-paste them to your life and business model. They will look and feel terrible.

So, mainly use logic.

When it comes to Channels of Distribution, you have to think these through before you start promoting and selling your Product.

Why is that? Because this, along with Revenue Streams (which we'll talk about in just a minute), is another essential part of the general business model with which you need to comply. No, you're not forced to stick to strict rules, but you need to have some landmarks on your business journey.

How do you get your Product in front of the Potential Client? What are the exact steps, from the moment your Product is ready to step away from your company to the moment it

reaches the Customer, just before he buys it? These are the Channels of Distribution of your Product.

What are you using as transportation?

- **Almost nothing** – Your Product is delivered remotely (it is an online, virtual Product), or your Shop is the same as the Production place and also acts as an End Retailer.
- **Your own cars / vehicles** – Can you cover, in due time, all the necessary distribution points where your Product needs to be found? What if everything is sold out? How fast can you refill the stock so that the Customers can continue to buy your Product with their need uninterrupted? Do you have enough stock, enough, but not too much, so your money isn't blocked in this stock? What if your own distribution solution breaks down? What is your backup plan?
- **A Delivery Service** – You have taken care of identifying and contracting the resellers, and you just need to take the Product from point A (your place) to point B (their place). How much does it cost you? Do you need special delivery conditions (certain

temperatures, special manipulation, special positioning, special rooms or security)? How much do these cost you? Did you include them in the Production Costs? Unless the client is paying the delivery, getting the Product to the client's home, the stores, or anywhere else it needs to go is your responsibility and your expense.

- **A partnership with a Distributor** – In general, these companies will take care of finding resellers for your Product, making contract with these retailers and even managing the Collecting part, securing the money representing your turnover. Everything for a commission. There are large retailers that won't go into business with you, but they will if contacted by these Distributors. Again, in this case, the commission is a cost you have to take into consideration and an element that needs to be reflected in the Product price.

You need to evaluate and take into account the exact timing and costs that these Channels of Distribution entail.

You need to know how long it takes to get your Product to the Retailer so that your Product will always be available for your Clients to buy.

Why is Distribution more important than Promoting the Product?

You will harm your Brand and your Company if you start promoting a Product (addressing the Public and saying "Come, buy me!"), and the customer cannot buy it because the Distribution creates delays and gets your Product to the retailer later than needed and expected. Your Potential Clients will have a poor experience, they will be disappointed, and you'll come to be perceived as a company that should not be trusted. Can you imagine how hard it is for a company to get a second chance? If the person that you've already convinced to come and buy your Product does not find your Product where you told him it would be, it will cost you up to 10 times more to convince him again. And this is only the outcome with the disappointed customer, and not the one who got mad at the situation.

When clients get mad, you need to have a good PR team and a communication crisis plan in order to handle the

sensitive situation accordingly. And yes, it will cost you. It will involve additional costs even if you have an in-house PR team or PR specialist. This situation definitely involves more work than being preventive, or, in other words, being prepared to face any situation regarding the Distribution segment. Even with a PR team working on it, there are still no guarantees that you can make peace with angry customers.

So, before starting to promote your Product to a certain area, make sure you already have the Product waiting for them in the store, ready to be bought. Advertising can generate sales, if there are (enough) Products to be sold.

Perhaps this brings a smile on your face, but there are statistics showing that 3 out of 10 businesses start focusing on Advertising before they close the strategic chapter of Distribution.

And, there are 6 out of 10 business that, in case their Product is sold out (in case of full, complete success), don't have a backup plan that makes it easy for the Product to be delivered overnight so the Costumers can continue to buy it when stores open their doors in the morning.

This happens **either** because they lack emergency stock (for example, they won't have the Products ready for another week), **or** because they have not figured out a system that will inform them about this status (they find out this information days after a retailer runs out of the Product).

The Revenue Streams

Almost every business owner or business professional you meet will tell you that generating sales is the essential aspect of your Success. In other words, you've made it, if you sell. Sell big.

But let's bring in the needed additional condition.

Selling your Products sold and having them be appreciated and loved is only Success if the Money generated by sales gets to you in time.

An often-overlooked, important strategic aspect of your business is having a clear vision of

"How and when will the Money come to me if a Product is being sold?"

When the money gets to you, does it lose some of its value? (This is called financial volatility. If your money takes 6 months to get back to you, there is enough time for political and economic climates to change and affect the value of your money.)

How certain are your predictions with respect to the return interval in which the money reaches you within, let's say, one week? How can you increase this? (Also, there are no guarantees where money is concerned.)

Is it an automated revenue stream, or do you need to have someone collect your money for you? Even in this modern, high-tech age, there are situations in which things can be utterly and unexpectedly rudimentary.

Which are the costs in each case?

For automated revenue streams, are there any transaction fees?

For physical money collection, what are the direct and indirect costs? You may need to take into account one (or more) person's salary, gas, company car leasing, additional insurance, etc.

When talking about **REVENUE STREAMS**, you don't necessarily need to think only about retail.

Each business may have different types of product selling processes.

- An online newspaper or magazine, an Internet service or a blog may have **SUBSCRIPTION** revenues, so you will need to define your revenue stream from this point of view (taking into account maintenance costs and transaction fees).
- If you have a software company, and you figure out how to manage those kinds of subscriptions, you can earn your money from those **TRANSACTION FEES**. Regular banks earn millions just by moving money from one bank account to another.
- Also, an online product can easily earn more revenue by selling **ADVERTISING** space on their web page. A sports team could generate revenue by selling **LOGO** placements on their T-shirts.
- Perhaps your business relies on **SPONSORSHIPS**, **ENDORSEMENTS**, **FRANCHISES** or other passive ways of getting revenue streams.

There are a lot of business contexts out there in the World.
Which one applies to you? Figure it out. Understand how to
control it and what costs it adds to your big picture.

A brand needs the best branding Ingredients the owner can get

Congratulation! You've reached the end of the second "Brands Come True" Module. Let's make a short recap and draw some conclusions.

In Module 1:

- We talked about **myths** related to defining Brands and Branding.
- We now know that a **Brand is not** a logo, a tagline, a Product, a Trademark or a Value Proposition: it is all these and much more.
- We defined BRAND as a **mosaic of perceptions** deeply ingrained in the mind of consumers. These perceptions have 5 dimensions:

1. **Mind reflection** (visual memories)
 2. **Emotions**
 3. **Experience**
 4. **Reputation**
 5. **Opinion**
- We made clear the **difference** between **BRAND** and **BRANDING**, the realistic noun and the active verb.
 - We talked about **BRANDING** as being a **conscious set of actions** intended to change that mosaic of perceptions that creates the idea of a **BRAND** linked to your Product.
 - We analyzed the most important **3 benefits** of taking care of your **BRAND** and investing time and resources in **BRANDING** activities:
 - **More success**
 - **More power**
 - **More money**
 - We concluded that a **BRAND** doesn't just happen, that it needs **planning, patience and constant attention**.

In Module 2:

- We started to analyze the branding **INGREDIENTS** needed by a business owner so that he is able to build the necessary branding **TOOLS** (module 3 – the next one) for his brand and, afterwards, to **START** (in module 4) and drive it towards **EVOLUTION** (in module 5), so that the Company is able to become really successful on all levels and perspectives.
- We talked about the **MINDSET** of the business owner and the fact that, while starting his company, he needs to bear in mind the answers to these 3 basic questions:
 - What do you love doing?
 - What are you good at?
 - How can your work improve the life of your Customers more than your competitors' can?
- We talked about the business **VISION**, and we learned that it needs to be as simple as defining a dream, a destination that once reached turns you, the business owner, into the best in your line of business. You want this not because you want the

money that will ultimately come to you, but because this is what you love doing.

- We discussed how important the **PRODUCT** (or the service) is and how we need to choose it carefully, to understand it in detail and to find new ways of manufacturing (or doing) it better, bearing in mind that it needs to have a lot of THE BEST material in it.
- We issued a **VALUE PROPOSITION** for the Product, which we should try not to link to the price, to the recipe or to undefined statements that cannot be proven (like “my product is better”).
- We started drawing our **BUSINESS MODEL**, and we understand how important it is to clearly comprehend
 - The **KEY ACTIVITIES** and **KEY RESOURCES** that help you make the Product
 - The **KEY PARTNERS** and **SUPPLIERS** on which you rely so that you succeed in keeping everything running and always available in stores
 - All the **COSTS** that generate and lead you to
 - The right **PRICE** of your Product

- The **CHANNELS OF DISTRIBUTION** chosen strategically so that your Product can meet
- The right **CLIENT SEGMENTS** and
- ⊖ Finally, the **REVENUE STREAMS** that we need to understand and to draft as clearly as possible.
- We made a **checklist** of the necessary **TOOLS** that need to be created so that they reflect both the **INGREDIENTS** defined by the business owner and also the **BUSINESS MODEL** (especially the Value Proposition of the Product and the Client Segment).
 - The **VERBAL IDENTITY** of the Product (or Company) – the naming and the tagline
 - The **VISUAL IDENTITY** – the logo and all the applications that derive from it, including business cards, letterheads, etc. but especially
 - The **PACKAGING** of the Product
 - The **SALES TALK** that the business owner needs to prepare and implement and which will help the agency create

- The right **CREATIVE MESSAGE** and **CONTENT** to transmit the Sales Talk to the Customers in the right way using
- The right **UNIVERSES** (environments, media vehicles and contexts) so that the Customer is convinced to go buy the Product, to start admiring and valuing it, to respect it and, finally, to love it.

The essential tools for educating your brand

Module Introduction

TOOLS FOR BUILDING

As business owner, you should have figured out by now that building a brand is like having to attend to your own living Product that feels, grows and has a mind of its own. You should get yourself involved in every stage of this process, so that the evolving part is carried out according to your visions, wishes and dreams. As already pointed out, it is much harder to correct things once you have started on the wrong foot, and it's definitely much more expensive to redo them in the proper manner.

In the next module, we will get your Brand the necessary tools that should be employed so that it starts generating value and communicating your company's identity and

messages to the public. We will talk about how these TOOLS (already identified in a checklist in the previous Module) will help your Brand get the job done for your Company. The task, besides getting your Product sold, will be to gain the admiration, respect and love of your Customers, in order for your company to become rich in added success and power.

These TOOLS will communicate for your Product in order to achieve results starting with awareness, sales and trust.

They will evolve inside UNIVERSES, which are the media in which they act and communicate as part of a COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN or a BRANDING STRATEGY.

Even if we are talking about communication, we are still thinking of Branding. Communication, as a term, encapsulates everything that interacts, in one way or another, with the Public. This sum of activities includes not only advertising and marketing actions, but also a system of tools that comprises outdoor billboards, social media, content marketing, client care activities and more.

In module 3, we will talk about

- How to choose your agency, bearing in mind your INGREDIENTS and the extent of your Budget
- How to work with your agency so that they understand exactly what you expect and consequently provide you with the necessary TOOLS
- How to decide which is the best solution for you
- What set of TOOLS you should receive

Finding the right creative partners

When we talked about the Business Model and finding those KEY PARTNERS and SUPPLIERS, we also meant these guys – the creative agency team. As we detailed in the last module, they will be the ones responsible not for the creation of your Product, but for getting it out into the World in the shape and form it needs in order to get attention, sales and A.R.L. (Admiration, **R**espect and **L**ove).

One of the first things that you need to decide when choosing an agency is whether you want a local or an international agency (depending on your Product's addressability and your main target audience). Do you want to meet face-to-face with the agency's team or you can work remotely with them? Do you want a company from your country? Does it help you if they are from abroad? Do you need them to have an international portfolio of clients? Are

you searching for an agency on Craigslist or would you rather go on recommendations?

Do your homework before you start looking for an agency

BUDGET

As in almost every aspect of life, when you buy something, especially a product that you will use for a long period of time, you need to decide how much money you want to invest in its purchase. This is, of course, related to how much money you have, in general, for your business.

There is no such thing as

"I don't know what my budget is."

Or worse,

"I don't have a budget."

If either of these is the case, then something is wrong with your entire business plan.

There is only one circumstance when it is acceptable to state that you don't know what your Budget is for the Creative Tools:

When you don't know what the needed Creative Tools for your business are, and you don't have any pointers that can help you predict and prepare this budget. This is all right. There are people that can help you figure this out. In fact, nowadays, many business owners use a general contractor who advises them regarding the contexts and cost prognosis and who also helps keep in touch with the agency. (This should be a person who speaks the same industry language and knows what Ingredients are needed, so that the agency will give you what you need.)

As far as the BUDGET is concerned, you need to consider 4 categories:

1. The Budget required to **CREATE THE TOOLS** – naming, tagline, logo, applications, packaging, creative message and content, website, brochures, point of sales materials, web banners, etc. Here you have to include on one hand Design Services, Art Direction

Services and, on the other hand, Production costs (printing, programming, etc.)

2. The Budget for **LAUNCHING** the Product, if necessary
 - launching strategy, planning, activities, implementation, media buying
3. The Budget for **MONTHLY ACTIVITIES** for branding, marketing and advertising activities – again, starting with a yearly plan of intended actions and activities, creative fees for implementing them, salaries for the in-house workforce (if applicable), media buying, Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, content marketing, PR, client care actions and viral stunts

NOTE:

These last two budgets are also very much influenced by the **media Universes** that you want to use. When I say Universes, I refer to the environments in which you'll be communicating: TV, radio, outdoor, websites, blogs, events, drop mailing, etc. A TV campaign will influence your budget considerably (even if we are talking about local TV stations) not only in media

buying, but also in the creation of the necessary TOOLS, in this case, a TV spot.

You can communicate your DESIRED TOOLS and UNIVERSES to the agency, or let them make a strategic proposal to you based on your budget.

4. The monthly Budget for **EVOLVING** and **MANAGING** the brand, updates, analytics, auditing, constant adjusting, trend watching, innovation in the communication process, preparation of future activities

The first two (budgets for TOOLS and LAUNCHING) - You need to consider these as Start-Up Investments. Think of them the same way you would think of the investment of buying the machine that helps you make or build the Product.

The other two budgets will be part of your Cash Flow (you will also invest money that comes from selling your Products), although not during your first year on the market. For these 12 months, you need to prepare **in advance** and

not rely on any money that comes from sales because this is an unpredictable segment.

Without these BUDGETS, there is really no point in starting the branding process, or the marketing and advertising one. To better understand the importance of these sets of activities, think about your Business as a car in which you are the Driver:

1. The Tools are the parts that help **assemble the vehicle**.
2. The Launching is making sure that the **engine runs** and that the car is moving.
3. The monthly budget for activities is **the gas** that you need to use for your Business to run and move around to reach the Clients.
4. The Budget for Evolving and Managing is changing the oil when needed, taking care of everything and not waiting for any of the parts to get broken. The most economical way to keep a car running is to **maintain** the key parts continuously and to upgrade them.

DESIRED OBJECTIVES

Another important aspect of your quest, which you need to decide on before contacting or starting to look for an agency, is **defining success**. What does success mean to you?

Be specific. Write down figures and an exact timeframe that you can use later on to gauge your progress and re-position yourself accordingly. Try to think of figures that relate to sales and not to awareness or visitors. In very few cases are those better than actions that generate money. The majority of businesses need sales in order to verify that you are on the right track. Remember that sales are just a first step towards real valid success.

If you aim for sales only in quantity and don't think of quality, you'll have a worse outcome in the long run.

Stating an exact figure to be a landmark of things going well with your branding and communication will also influence the real-life needed budget.

For example, if you need or want to sell 1,000,000 pieces of a 1-dollar bag of cookies in the next 6 months, then you

need **a certain budget**. If you need to sell 10 million pieces or items within the same period of time, then you need **a different budget**. The difference between the two budgets is to be found in the volumes of media-related investments that need to be made and in the fact that you need to adjust the inventory of the required TOOLS so that they allow you to achieve those figures.

In the current, interactive business environment, there are business owners who hope that they can achieve viral sales, that their business will be transformed into in a success story overnight. Don't day dream too much.

You can use percent improvements only if you have a history to which you can relate them. Comparing the data generated by this month's sales to the sales from the previous month is **good**, evolution-wise. Comparing this month's results with the results of the same month last year would be much **better**.

These desired objectives that are linked to sales are **impossible to guarantee**. In fact, you should avoid anyone or any agency that makes such promises. You cannot control all the parameters. Any professional agency will make

assumptions and will try to **predict** results, but nobody will guarantee them. If you still get such a strong promise then

- The agency has a strong hold on many aspects of the business, like product alterations, distribution channels, sales team, etc. OR
- The agency is assuming bottom results on their own risk. If they have previous experience with similar products, if they know how the target market responds, they can figure it out, for example, that about 500,000 bags of cookies will be sold. They will cleverly assume a 75,000 volume because they will be making a worst-case-scenario type of assumption.

WHEN YOU NEED IT DONE (the TOOLS)

If you want the job done next week, that will turn out to be impossible. You should take into account at least 3 to 6 months. Depending on the complexity of the project, the TOOLS alone may require up to 12 months to be developed.

If you have the budget for it, you should start as soon as possible. Some of the best branding and communication

projects are developed before the Product takes a physical form.

So, your agency NEEDS to know your budget (and desired Tools and Universes) and will require knowledge of your desired objectives and timeline in order to give you a straight answer. An answer will vary from the following:

- **“The budget is too small for us.”** – This means we are talking about an agency that is out of your league; don’t be offended. Not everybody can afford to have Jerry Seinfeld come to his birthday party.
- **“The budget is too small, and we cannot respect the desired timeline.”** – Some agencies accept only a limited number of projects per year. This is because they want to keep the quality of their work and their agency culture unaltered and uncompromised. They don’t want to dilute their processes.
- **“For this budget, we can deliver only this and that.”** – If this is the case, you need to find more resources for all the other potential tools or promotion enhancements that you need. Perhaps the budget is not sufficient for you to create and print a Product

Catalogue. Can you sell your Product without it? Is this a TOOL that you can postpone?

- “The budget is OK for what you wish to accomplish. **Let’s start!”** – Remember that they have enough experience to know if you are realistic in expectation. Again, they will not guarantee your desired results. The results play the part of validating the course of action that your business is taking.
- Or, there are several other possible answers.

How do you start looking?

Don’t Google it, not just yet.

If you have friends and acquaintances who are also business owners and entrepreneurs, see whom they are working with, even if they do not operate in the same product area as you.

If you don’t have any contacts, see if you can identify agencies by the work that you like in certain areas of expertise.

It is not advisable to go to **your competitor's** agency. Don't pitch to them because they will either continue to work for your competitor while working for you (if they don't have exclusivity contracts on that particular segment of industry), or they will leave that competitor and have their team work for you (probably on account of the fact that you have given them more money). In the second context, you should ask yourself what will keep that agency loyal to you when somebody else pitches them the way you did. Yes, indeed there are exceptions and special contexts that you should consider.

Despite general opinion, experience in your exact niche may not be an extraordinary asset. Perhaps a fresh new view and approach will prove to be more valuable.

Instead of looking for agencies that have done creative work for other cookie products (for example), try looking for agencies that have experiences in the Snack and Food department.

Or, why not give a chance to an agency that wants to try something new and is capable of innovation? Even if they cannot present a specific industry-related portfolio, they

may be a good choice if they can present well-planned and magnetic work solutions from other fields of activity.

Well, now you can Google.

After taking into account other recommendations, you should do your own research. Try to find out more about the agency you would like to hire. How do they write their blog? How does their website look? What do people say about them? Are there any complaints? Can you trust those complaints, or are they perhaps just from scorned former employees?

How old is their business? If they are young, have they carried out enough successful projects that you feel they are prodigies?

How does their reputation feel to you? Is it a positive one? Is Googling them enough? Do you want to hear what some of their clients think? Try to reach the former ones. Call them and ask for information and recommendations.

Contact them

If you can meet them, get together for a coffee. If you can have a video conference, that's perfect too.

They will ask for additional information before accepting to meet you either face-to-face or virtually. Don't worry, after these past two and a half modules, you are prepared! If there is any sensitive information that requires an NDA to be signed, be prepared with a set of information that doesn't require them to sign anything for this initial meeting.

At the meeting, you should try to analyze

- **How interested they are in your company**, in finding that SPECIAL thing from your Business Model, that “the best” material. They need to fall in love with your Product, because you know they have enough reasons to do so. Why is it so important? Just like in sales, an agency cannot create brilliant TOOLS if they don't trust and understand the Product.
- **How much they focus on the desired results**. Any healthy, result-driven agency knows that their clients' success means the agency's success. They know you

need these successful end results in order to be accomplished as a client and as a business venture, so, consequently, their work should be meaningful and representative for your business investment.

- **What they think about your intended client segments.** Do they agree? Do they disapprove? Why is that? How logical are their arguments?
- **How they work.** Try to understand their manner of interaction and work process. Any agency prognosis should look many steps ahead in terms of what needs to be done for your Product and in what order. They should give you a glimpse of estimated effort and time sequencing, of what should happen at what particular time. What parts of your ideas and plans can they translate into TOOLS? Do they complete this image with their own ideas? Do they have other solutions? How do their arguments sound? Do you like how they think? Do you feel undermined, or do they talk to you as to a friend?

You should feel very comfortable during the meeting. They should make you feel comfortable not in a fake way, but

with a professional manner. Remember that you will be spending a lot of time briefing them and giving feedback to them.

You need to TRUST them. After all the recommendations, analysis, portfolios and case studies, YOU are the one who needs to feel that you and the Product are in the right hands.

How can you be sure you made the right decision?

How do you know you made the right decision when choosing your dentist or heart surgeon?

At some point, you nevertheless need to decide, to go with your feelings and take a risk. You may very well be disappointed. Don't worry about it. It is a good thing to realize that some business partners are not right for you. This gets you closer to finding the right ones.

You cannot be upset or mad at the agency that will not deliver. If this is the case, you need to keep looking.

You cannot rest until you find the right people for you and your business, and when that happens, you'll know you are on the right track!

Do I need more than one agency?

This is up to you.

On one hand, if it is easier for you to have one full-service agency working for you, then one agency is enough.

On the other hand, if you can find someone (a consultant) or a strategic agency, then you can have more specialized agencies for all your strategic needs.

- There are **branding agencies** that specialize in preparing you from Day 1 and will create those INGREDIENTS together with you as the business owner. They will handle all the verbal and visual identity segments, and, in certain cases, they will even create the creative message for your Product, identifying the strategic content and Universes.

- There are **media agencies** that are able to distribute the newly created messages via advertising campaigns in national, regional and local areas.
- You can use **digital agencies** for the online tools and environments that need to be created and broadcast. They are normally supervised by the branding agency and, most often, they're also **online marketing oriented, in skill and intent of promotion**. These agencies or studios can even help you develop your own app, in case you need one or consider it fit for the promotion of your Product.
- There are **content agencies** that can provide social media exposure, blogging posts and all types of digital content.
- There are **PR agencies** that can carry out media relationships, like Corporate Social Responsibility programs, in-house communication means and incentives and events for the company, for promotional purposes and to influence relationships, even, in some cases, HR marketing activities.

You should know that there are very few agencies that can create and cover all the aspects upon which the activities you need to create and maintain your TOOLS depend.

It is our strong belief that the most efficient and cost effective formula is the scenario in which a branding agency (with strong marketing and a creative professional portfolio) handles the relationship with all the other specialized agencies that bring added value to your Product by creating proper TOOLS for it. You need your strategy applied in a unitary way, but you also need state of the art technologies applied to your TOOLS. Well, the best way to achieve outstanding results is by employing a **general contractor** that can innovatively create the KEY TOOLS you need and **specialized agencies** with experts that can create niche TOOLS (apps, SEO, big data analytics, programmers, etc.).

In conclusion, you also need someone who is able to manage the TOOLS after you create them. You should also have this in mind at the stage we are at right now. Real branding agencies are prepared for this, and they can handle your activities for the long run.

Let your agency know you

You have identified who's going to take care of your TOOL development and maintenance, using a creative, strategic and wise approach. This is a huge step forward.

At this point in your business journey, you will once more see that the money invested in these Modules is paying off. You will notice that you are prepared to start working with your agency in a way that enables your contribution and feedback-driven briefing with them in the most proper and productive way possible.

A good brief sets the stage for brilliancy.

BRIEFING YOUR AGENCY

At first this may seem like a frustrating process. It is not, not if you understand from the very first moment that all the questions they “annoyingly” ask you are questions about yourself and what you love doing. You are an expert on these topics. Don’t worry about giving the wrong answers. There are none!

Don’t be afraid to tackle technical terms that you don’t understand. Your agency won’t try to put you in a bad position. They are just professionals who have their own technical language. Asking them nicely to explain each term you feel you don’t get is essential, so that you don’t play the part of “know it all.” It definitely will not help you. You don’t have an image to protect as far as they are concerned. If they come to think that you’re less than prepared to take on this responsibility, then this may turn into the great opportunity of not working with them anymore.

Remember! You need to feel comfortable with your agency at every stage of the process. This is not just because you are their client and are paying the bills, but because you are their partner, and you are offering them a good deal in

which, by helping you, they gain the opportunity to be brilliant. For a smart agency, that's a huge opportunity.

So, how does this whole “briefing” thing happen?

There is no exact procedure or strictly defined law that details how this should be done. Each agency has its own approach and its own vision regarding this stage. Generally speaking, you should expect:

A brief questionnaire

This is a set of questions that they might e-mail you, so you can answer them in writing. This questionnaire should be a preamble to an extended briefing meeting. The questionnaire itself should be used as a guide so the professionals from the agency are prepared before meeting you. Very few agencies stop the briefing process with this questionnaire. If an agency doesn't follow up with a meeting after receiving your written answers, then they are missing a great opportunity to understand fully the account (which is how they will refer to you inside the agency).

This is a general briefing. Each TOOL will then have a separate briefing session tactically directed by a creative director or a strategic planner with you by their side.

Some possible samples of the questions from this general brief questionnaire are as follows:

- Who are you?
- What do you value most in your business life?
- What is your Product or service?
- What are its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)?
- What is your Product's value proposition? Why would anyone buy your Product or service from you and not from a competitor?
- How much does your Product cost compared to that of your competitor? Is it cheaper, the same or more expensive? Why is that?
- Can you provide any research and reports that help us understand the current situation of the company or the market you are in?
- What do you need from us? What TOOLS? Why? When do you want them ready?

- Who are we addressing? What do they think of us?
Why should they care?
- Who is the competition? What are they telling the audience, and should we be conveying that same message? What is a SWOT analysis of your competitors? What differentiates us from them?
- How should we be communicating? What adjectives describe the feeling or approach?
- What are we saying in terms of message: what is our vision? What do we want audiences to take home from our message?
- Any mandatory information that must be included? List of deliverables? Preconceived ideas? Format parameters? Limitations and restrictions?
- What are the timeline, schedule and budget?
- What media vehicles do you have in mind so as to deliver the message?
- Who do we report to? Who exactly is approving the completed work? Who should be informed of our progress and through what means? Monthly reports? Weekly meetings?

Again, this questionnaire should be the basis for a follow-up, face-to-face meeting in which the Agency Team will go into detail to find out from you all this and any additional information.

The TOOLS checklist

If your questionnaire asks you to state the TOOLS that you think you need, write down all the elements that feel right to you. Remember though, that the Agency may also need the freedom to bring innovation to the table or to give you a refreshed updated of the Tools you have brought forward or decided upon. For example, a Facebook fan page may no longer be of use to you. Keep an open mind and trust your creative professionals.

Need vs. want

Which do you prefer?

- a) An agency that gives what you need?
- b) Or an agency that gives what you want?

You should combine the two.

On one hand, you are the most knowledgeable expert regarding your Product. Even if you are not a branding and marketing professional, your instincts about some of the contexts in which your Product finds itself are extremely valuable.

On the other hand, your agency has extended experience in working with integrated strategies. Let them help you. Be smart and take advantage of their know-how!

The debriefing meeting

As already mentioned, as far as any agency is concerned, the written answers to a set of questions should be considered as nothing more than light reading of an interview transcript. It provides some information regarding the Client, which is you, and it provides a glimpse of your Product Universe. The chances are slim that someone will really get to know you from reading this brief. So, most often, you will be invited to a debriefing meeting where you will get together with the person responsible for your project within the agency. Perhaps this is the account

manager, the strategic planner or even the creative director. In short, you will meet a professional with whom you will dissect all the answers from the questionnaire.

Why is this meeting necessary?

If you've already answered the brief questionnaire, then why should you meet again on the same topic? Couldn't they just invite you to this meeting right away?

The answer is: No! They need your written input, and then they need to convey their debriefing conclusions with you one on one, so, it makes sense to have these two stages.

First of all, writing everything down gives you the opportunity to think things over, to make everything crystal clear in your mind and to form an overall conception of how this process should be carried out.

Second, the meeting is necessary in order to discover what is hidden in plain sight. When we know a topic very well, the way we know our own business and Product, we tend to consider some details too technical, boring or hard to understand.

The meeting is a very good opportunity for the agency to explore approaches and perspectives other than yours. A lot of people, especially trained professionals, will ask you a lot of questions that address the Problem from different angles. Some of these different ways of analyzing your Product will be mind-blowing and revealing even for you, and they'll make you say, in many cases, "I never thought about it like this!"

Again, creative teams are experts in creating 360-degree approaches, because this is what they do for a living. Be patient with all the questions, and have fun. It is a very fun meeting for everybody.

Don't expect solutions during this meeting. The creative professionals that you meet at this point are perhaps the ones who will make some direction proposals. They will help you sort through some possibilities by testing them on the spot. Say exactly what you feel, but also have an open mind. Don't say no to anything, unless the possible ideas that they throw on the table contradict your moral views.

What happens after this debriefing meeting?

Please remember that this briefing stage is a **general one**. It is highly possible that the agency, in creating each needed TOOL, will also have other briefs, questionnaires and meetings. For the verbal identity of the brand, they may have one brief; for the visual identity, another one. Or, they will take strategic responsibility and extract everything from this meeting.

Finally the agency will have enough info to

- Either accept or decline the project. There is still room for this, unless you have already signed the contract.
- Suggest a detailed budget that fits the one you've issued
- Suggest an exact timeline that, hopefully, will also be according to what you want

How does a brief help?

First of all, it helps YOU:

- It gives you the opportunity to state in one document your business objectives and goals (You will use the INGREDIENTS identified and detailed in Module 2.)
- It concentrates facts and misconceptions regarding your business, your Product and the market context.
- You will have a good landmark document that will provide criteria for evaluating your business strategy and for suggesting TOOLS that are to be custom made for you.
- It is a solid ground for proactive interaction with the agency because, as with a contract, you are stating some very important directions for which your creative partners should be later on held accountable in case of non-fulfillment.
- Finally, an important aspect already discussed just a few pages before, this brief will indicate metrics for quantifying success.

Second of all, it helps the AGENCY:

- It provides background information and a solid foundation for the creation of the TOOLS that you need to achieve your goals.
- It provides raw material, basic information that they can search for hidden truths (things that you may not tell because they seem too technical or unimportant for a creative agency) and specific insights that make you and your Product special.
- It reveals the personality and values of you as a Business Owner and of your Company as a Client, both as individuals and as an organization.
- The brief will be a good justification document for all the created TOOLS.
- It concisely informs all members of the agency team.

Finally, the Brief provides the needed criteria for evaluating the TOOLS, both for the Client and the Agency.

Let's do a short recap:

- You've identified your own essential **INGREDIENTS**, strategically and business-wise, all within a clear, custom-tailored business model that describes what happens with your Product and inside your Company.
- You've drawn a checklist of **TOOLS** that you think you need so that you can start a discussion with an agency, which will then complete this list and develop the TOOLS.
- You have a clear image about how to choose an **AGENCY** that is able to develop the right TOOLS using the INGREDIENTS that make you unique.
- You have sent, in the form of a **BRIEF**, all the data related to you, your company and the Product.
- You have an updated **TOOLS CHECKLIST**, a clear **TIMETABLE** and an exact **BUDGET** for the TOOLS to be developed.

Start building those tools!

Each agency may have a different approach to the creative process and, in particular, to the development of the tools and the overall promotion of your Product. Even the steps or the order in which the TOOLS are generated are different from one creative team to another.

Make sure you understand clearly how things run their course in your agency. If you did not understand the process of how your TOOLS are developed while in the stage of hunting for an agency, then this step is a good chance to catch up.

When starting to build the TOOLS, you need to decide, along with your agency, the Universes in which your communication will take place. It is important for the agency to have a clear decision from you, for example, that you'll want or need to use TV stations as advertisement vehicles, because, in this case, they have to create the storyboard and produce the TV spot for you.

We will be following a progressive format of the Process that I've been developing over the years.

TYPES OF TOOLS

In building up the TOOLS, there are two categories:

1. **IDENTITY DNA** – These are those tools that are influenced by the graphic direction and anatomy, the DNA derived from the Logo or its primary applications (business cards, letterheads). Verbal identity tools (name, tagline) are also part of this category.

These are TOOLS that are used to create other tools (primary tools) because they represent a Constant, an invariable. They don't need to be altered over time, as would be the case if they were influenced by the creative message.

2. **CREATIVE DNA** – These are the tools developed with the creative message embedded. Because they are used in communicating the sales intention, they want and need to make changes in the Person they are addressing: they want to change him into a loyal

Client. Because the Creative Message needs to be adapted and changed, these TOOLS need to change accordingly, making room for new creative messages to come on stage.

Note:

All CREATIVE DNA tools are **subordinate**, in terms of rules of design or tone of voice, to the IDENTITY DNA tools. So, for example, a sales flyer will respect the IDENTITY DNA even if it doesn't use the exact matrix of the Logo.

THE PROPOSALS

When receiving proposals from an agency, there are three main contexts to have in mind:

1. In many cases, you need to **trust the agency**. They will give you one set of Proposals that is to be considered the Solution. (It is the same idea as when you get surgery: you get the thing done, even if there are multiple options available for the doctor and that specific operation.)

2. There are cases in which it is more helpful for you to have **the proposals developed** into logos and packaging so as to have a detailed picture of the potential promotional impact that comes with each proposal.
3. In other cases, you will get the **full implementation** for each proposal (two or three sets): the name implemented also as a logo, as well as on the packaging, and the tagline and the creative idea implemented as creative message for a printed ad and storyboard (if you plan to broadcast your promotional content on TV).

It all depends on how you want things to happen and what exactly this process entails from the agency's point of view. For some agencies, there are also second and third options or promotional settings available, if the budget allows for it or if you pay extra. So, it may also be a money issue.

How to decide easily?

How to choose from the proposals that you get from your agency?

We'll talk now about the set-up needed for you to make the best decisions, so that you are prepared for this step.

- **Ask for arguments from the agency.** Basically and as a general rule, almost all professional Agencies give you:
 - o Insights about the genesis of the idea, or how the team came up with a specific proposal
 - o Punctual referrals regarding the Problems that each specific proposal is solving. They should be able to show solid evidence or projections proving that they have solved the Creative Brief you sent.
 - o Arguments about why one specific Proposal is a good one
 - o Predictions and proofs of flexibility, that there is no problem in further developing the Proposals, in applying them in accordance

with your Product's needs and in ensuring time-added value for the solutions found for you, so that you, as a Client, are sure that the options drawn up for you will not become outdated

- **Create your own small decision committee.** If want to have other opinions or advice regarding the proposals that you received from the agency, you can create a committee in which you invite 2 – 4 people. Despite your first instinct, don't choose people you love (friends or family), but people whose opinion you trust and people who you know have the professional ability to help you decide. By setting up such a committee, you will help yourself cut down the amount of people that you'll be asking for an honest opinion. Asking everybody you know what they think is not an option because
 - o **Creative proposals are subjective.** A person may hate a logo proposal because it's "green." That's not a valid argument.
 - o **You lose time** and money.

- You don't get anywhere. The final decision is yours, and the process of making it should not be a democratic one. In business you are the only one responsible for the success and failure of your Company – enjoy it!
- Give yourself deadlines, so that you have further incentives in the decision-making process. If you don't push yourself, if you don't create limits for yourself, you may put off making decisions, which can cause you to fall into the abyss of indecision.

How can you be sure that you made the best decision?

Even if you create the perfect set-up to make it easier, you will still end up having to make the decision on your own.

As for an obvious decision, there is **no such thing**. Not in an abstract way of speaking, and not in business. Whether you decide by yourself or with the help of others, you'll still have no guarantees that this decision is the one that will bring

you certainty of success or maximum performance for your Product.

Instinct

We are talking about your professional instinct, born from your life experience. The decision driven by instinct is the only **cost-free** situation that can provide certainty of some sort. We are talking about your instinct and your own involvement. (That's why it's free.) Your past actions, your past successes, the fact that you feel that this is the right way, removing yourself from any professional, preset process of analyzing contexts, having the courage to take calculated risks: all these can provide the proper safety net for your decision-making unrest.

The advisor

Often a branding or business consultant, this advisor should be used apart from your small decision committee and should be professionally able to see you through all the risks and benefits of each proposal. You'll pay this professional an hourly fee, just like a lawyer.

The Focus Group

One of the most important aspects of the decision-making process is the answer to these questions: What would the Public think about it? How would they want it to be? You will find many specialists who will encourage you to pay for Focus Group studies so that you can ascertain the feasibility of your Product and the means of communicating it through the input of some representative Public segments.

The specialized company gathers around 20 – 25 people in a meeting room, people selected by age, gender, education and income criteria, who may define the question at hand to a certain extent. A facilitator then presents the proposals and asks for opinions. There are interactive discussions that drive everybody to issue an opinion. You'll get a qualitative report detailing their opinions on the matter (did they like it or not? and with what reactions and perspectives?). If the people are poorly selected or the proposals are not presented in the right contexts, then it is highly probable that you will receive a falsely created and useless opinion. This is why you should trust real professionals to organize this kind of research.

Social Research

This is a high-volume, social discussion with people who you are trying to identify as belonging to or representative of your target. It's like requesting an exact opinion from a segment of people. The higher the number, the more accurate the results will be. There is social research that identifies needs, opinions of competitors and, in accordance with this step, opinions about TOOLS.

You will also receive a report of quantitative and qualitative data that is influenced by the professionalism of the questions addressed during the research interview, the expertise of the interviewers and the team that makes the data compelling. It is a costly method of verifying the success of the TOOLS, but it is definitely one of the most accurate. Again, assurances of success are not on the table.

...or a combination of all options

Developing the tools

THE IDENTITY DNA CATEGORY

The Verbal Identity

The first thing on your agency's to-do list should be **Naming** and capturing your Business Vision in a **Tagline or Slogan**. These two are the first expressions of

- Tonality and Personality embedded in the Product
- Positioning and targeting the intended customer segments

What should you ask for?

- **Uniqueness** – Whatever side of the industry you're on, no matter the geographical region you're focused in, you shouldn't rely on Google to know if your name is unique. There are specialized companies that can provide validation in this matter. It is important to register for a trademark for your newly created name.
- **Simplicity** – If you don't understand it the first time you hear it, then you should place a big question

mark on that proposal. If you cannot read it easily, or if at a first glance you read some other phrase or word, then, again, you should be careful with that one. You **must** say it out loud! Can you say it without fracturing your tongue? Does it sound natural?

- **Domain availability** – Even if you don't plan to create a Product website or a microsite from the start, you should buy all available major domains (.com, .net, .info, .us). Which is the most important for you? Which one, if it's not available, will make the Product naming decision easier? There are cases in which the Client has a fixation with the DOT com domain. Does this apply to you? Do you want only a www.productname.com (for example) type of domain or you can live with www.myproductname.com or www.productnamehq.com?

Don't expect to fall in love with any proposal at first sight. If you want the naked truth, you will not be 100% convinced from the start. Don't wait for that moment to happen. If you have kids or pets, you must have had trouble naming them.

It was only over time that you ended up loving and feeling 100% happy with the name you choose. Isn't that right?

The Visual Identity

Either you receive these TOOLS along with the Verbal Identity, or you will receive them after approving the Name for your Product (or Company). In both cases, Visual Identity is what almost everybody waits for when developing the TOOLS on which the brand's existence rests.

What is also true about these TOOLS is that you will need them to hint at aspects of tonality and personality and elements of positioning and targeting.

In visual identity, we are talking mainly about the **LOGO**, but also the applications that derive from it (stationery, collaterals or even packaging).

What should you ask for in a LOGO?

—**Discernible** – Can you read it? Can you understand the name you've chosen or do you read "Piño Colodo" instead of "Piña Colada?"

- Memorable** - If you look at it for 3 seconds and then move your eyes away, do you remember something about the visual anatomy? Is it too plain or, at the other extreme, too prominent?
- Scalable** – a good logo should look good in large or medium sizes (normal sizes), but also in more or less a reduced size. If you use the logo on a business card or small label is it still intelligible?
- Effective without color** – Yes, colors are important, but you don't want color to be an essential aspect of the logo. There will be plenty of cases in which you will need to use a plain, white-on-black logo or a grey-shaded one. How does the logo look without the help of colors? There will be a lot of contexts, both online and offline, in which your logo will be monochrome.

If during the naming step you had trouble knowing what was best for you, when it comes to the logo, the majority literally falls in love with more than one Proposal.

Here is a trick which can help you decide more easily: take a good look at all the proposals, read all the arguments supporting these proposals carefully(if they exist) and put

everything away **for three days**. Don't put them in a drawer, but set them on your desk, at hand. Don't look at them intentionally. If you do, just make it quick, as if by mistake.

Again, don't ask everyone you meet during that period of time to give you an opinion. It will do more harm than good.

Also, in order to decide what the logo will finally end up being, it may help you to receive certain applications with it.

Either from the point of view of IDENTITY DNA:

- Business card layout and implementation
- Letterhead
- E-mail signature graphic
- Website header

Or communication-oriented CREATIVE DNA:

- Packaging implementations
- Print Ad

Remember that these may or may not be part of your Agreement with the Agency and that these could imply additional costs or be delivered as sets of proposals.

There are situations in which you will receive 3 proposals for a Logo from an agency, and the application process will be done **only** after you have chosen one specific proposal. Instead of having the agency develop 3 sets of applications for each proposed logo, they will do only 1 set for the winning proposal.

The Packaging

There are agencies that include the packaging in the IDENTITY DNA category. They are not wrong in doing so, but we think that there are situations in which the creative message would help the Product selling process more if embedded in the Packaging graphic solution or, in certain cases, even in the anatomy and physical structure of the Packaging.

Many forget that the tonality and personality of a Product can also be mirrored in the shape of the Packaging. Often, this does not happen because there are additional costs in comparison to purchasing containers that are already available. For example, if you have a jam factory that makes

super delicious jams from strawberries, you could choose the

- plain and cheap type of jar that has a regular shape and is manufactured as lot production

OR

- a unique and more expensive type of jar, a Strawberry-shaped jar that will support, in a creative way, the selling process. It will definitely be easily spotted on the shelf, and it will communicate the main ingredient before the Customer even reads the label.

This doesn't mean that you need to stretch the budget to extend the uniqueness factor into your Packaging. If an idea is presented to you, but you don't have enough money to produce your own special containers, then just put it the folder for further development and evolution. Perhaps you'll even motivate yourself by transforming it into a target, like "After we sell our first million jars of Strawberry Jam, we'll invest in these jars! It's a promise!"

What should you ask for as far as PACKAGING is concerned?

- Product Visibility** – If possible, let people see the Product. People feel that they are faced with a sincerity statement when they can really see the Product as it is, when it is not hidden. More and more consumers know that Product Images on the Packaging design are edited and enhanced to give them a visual or a tactile taste of your Product.
- Easy to open** – In terms of graphics, there are situations in which you need to include instructions on how to open the Packaging. As far as anatomy is concerned, the packaging needs to be easy to use since it is the start of the product experience. You also need to take care not to have too easy of an opening process because transportation, in addition to shelf occurrences, will reduce the number of products when your Product can be easily opened. Almost all Clients want to be the first person that opens your Product. Pay extra attention to this part of the Product Experience.

- Creativity and Uniqueness** – We’ve just talked about this and how it can be found either in the graphic form of the artistic layout, or in unique packaging (or both).
- Visual impact** – How will you stand out in the crowd? How will people identify you quickly on the shelf (or wherever you are exhibiting your Product)? Do all these factors naturally stay in tune with the tonality and personality of the Product? Don’t push it just for the sake of having Packaging that “screams,” that is forced to stand out, unless you have an integrated strategy to support it.
- Informative** – People read the label. They truly analyze the Packaging. In many cases, the Packaging is the Sales Representative who has the Sales Talk with them, the thing that is presenting the Product to them and **answering** their questions. Does your packaging do that? Does your Packaging present the Product in an interesting and informative way?

THE CREATIVE DNA CATEGORY

The Creative message

As a reminder, these tools with creative DNA are in strong connection with the Sales Talk that you've prepared on your own for that imaginary Customer who has all the time in the World to listen to the entire story behind the Product and to all the benefits and arguments, whether they are technical or practical.

What the agency is supposed to do with this Sales Talk is to translate it using creative communication and strategic approaches.

There will be copywriters involved to find the right words for communicating all benefits and reasons to buy the Product and art directors to create the right visual set-up for the messages on different media vehicles (print ads or TV spots).

The creative message and content are intended to create the right states of mind in the potential customers. They should use personality and tonality to communicate and induce these feelings, not only to draw attention.

What should you ask for in a CREATIVE MESSAGE?

— It does the JOB – No matter how funny the creative idea developed by the agency's team is, it still needs to help your business:

- To sell – If this is what you've decided is your success metric.
- To generate leads – Perhaps your business model needs the creative message, delivered through advertising and other means, to get people interested, identify interested people as target Customers and then address them in another, more extensive sales meeting (via webinars, telesales, face-to-face meetings). Some Products and Services cannot be conveyed through the use of creative messages, the ones that directly generate sales. In the majority of cases, advertising the creative message is just contributing to an integrated mix of marketing that is set up to create sales.

- *To generate and maintain trust and awareness* –

Again, there are contexts in which a company also needs to address customer loyalty. There will be at least two types of messages that a company will run in the media simultaneously:

- *The “Come buy the Product because...”* message, which has the intent of generating sales, and
- *The “We are here for you. Keep trusting us with...”* message.

- **And more** – Remember that the success of a branding, marketing or advertising campaign **is not** quantified by the amount of sales that are generated alone. These metrics are just a good indicator that you are on the right track to achieving real success: loyal customers that, in addition to buying your Products and only yours, are also promoting and protecting you in social contexts that you cannot influence. Again, the goal of your company is to help customers have a better life by using your Product.
- **Tell the truth** – the simple one. Don't promise anything that your Product cannot deliver. The worst

thing you can do when communicating a creative message is to lie and oversell. Don't force the sale. People should understand for themselves that you make their life better, that your Product is helping them and making them happier. You should be demonstrating this by bringing forth arguments and benefits. There are cases in which exaggerations are funny and do the job, but never let a customer get the wrong idea.

- **It is smart and creative** – The creative message should bring MAGIC to your communication. It should be both memorable and unique. It should tell the story in such a way that people will remember the action and the characters, but **also the PRODUCT**. There are so many TV ads, for example, that give the viewer an extraordinary visual experience. These ads catch the eye with dramatic elements or comical moments, with the talented performance of actors, with awesome 3D and visual special effects. The result, however, can be bewildering; if you ask people what Product the TV ads were promoting, there is a high chance that they will have no clue.

How does the agency MATERIALIZE the creative message?

If you can't at first receive all the tools that are influenced by the Creative Message, then you should at least receive the PRINT AD. Why this and not a Storyboard for a TV ad? Because the TV spot storyboard will give you a fake sense of flexibility. Remember that the creative idea and message created by the agency needs to be implemented for different media vehicles. The same creative message will need to be transformed in a different way for Radio, Television, Online Media, Print and Outdoors.

Print is the correct medium because it has the right setup:

- You still have **visual implementation** (art directing) but in a motionless Universe, without the “unfair” help of a TV ad (where you have so many instruments that you can use in order to convey the message to the audience in those 30 seconds – music, voice overs, acting).
- You still have the **copy hooks** – headline, argumentative copy, conclusions and call-to-actions statements, all in tune with the Visual.

In conclusion, a print ad implementation of the Creative Message offers you the most complete “test drive” you may need in order to decide; again, this is applicable only if your agency doesn’t have the time or the budget to test the message on all media vehicles during the proposal phase.

The Content for all Universes required

After deciding which Creative Message suits your needs, you’ll have it implemented in all necessary materials. You will need the creative message multiplied in different content display forms, depending on the type of final TOOL that is being created by the agency. These TOOLS will help you have a unitary image and communicate properly as you try to achieve your desired goals (to get sales, leads and awareness).

At this stage, it is important to create all appropriate TOOLS even if you don’t need them immediately or if you don’t have the budget to complete them.

For example, it is important to create the Sales Brochure, even if you don’t have the money needed to print it, so that

you always have a hard copy of it. Don't postpone it for when you have the required budget. Why?

- **It's less expensive** – If the agency creates all the TOOLS at once, it will take them less time than if after six months you come back and ask them to make that specific TOOL or service for you.
- **It will be more in tune** with all the other TOOLS that you are creating at the same time. Again, the creative flow is already set up, everybody is working on your project and, consequently, is on the same page, creatively and production-wise. If you wait for your production budget, that sales brochure may be a bit out of sync with the other tools. Maybe it won't happen, but why risk it?
- **It's time efficient.** If it's done at that point, then you'll use it. Even if it needs some alterations afterwards, because either figures or product details have changed, your brochure is ready to help you in your strategy. It is ready now.

What TOOLS could I develop with the Creative Content?

PRINTED TOOLS

- **SALES FLYER** This is a small sheet of paper (also known as a leaflet) that is very useful in an exhibition context or when being handed out on the street. It is the quick vehicle that conveys the information about the Product or the Company.
 - The **content** needs to be adapted because this material has a very low attention rate. In the first 3 seconds, it needs to convince the reader not to throw it in the next garbage can. So it would be advisable to have more of a “call-to-action” type of content, similar to that of the Outdoor tools but with contact information. You can also experiment with the shape of the flyer. Who says it needs to be rectangular?
- **SALES LEAFLET** This is similar to the Flyer, but the area that is covered with information is larger, and the sheet of paper is almost always folded, either bi-

folded (folded into halves) or **tri-folded** (folded into thirds).

- The **content** can provide more information along with the call-to-action content, especially in terms of benefits and arguments. It can also include a small section highlighting your experience and expertise.
- **SALES PAMFLET OR BROCHURE** This is in a booklet format, made with multiple sheets of paper.
 - The **content** will now be extensive. This is where the creative team will fully translate the entire Sales Talk in a strategic way using narrative lines, anecdotes, history insertions and everything that is needed to translate the Sales Story to readable literature for the Client. The Great Secret for this type of TOOL is to create content that is doesn't try to sell, but to convince. The reader must not feel trapped by the reading, but pleasantly interested; he needs to be informed, and he needs to feel that the brochure was worth reading.

The **design** of all these TOOLS, the ones detailed above and the ones we will present next, needs to be adapted for the physical size, the Universe (print, online, outdoor) and the moment of interaction.

ONLINE TOOLS

- **WEBSITE** The smart and helpful media step forward is to have the brochure with the Sales Story morphed into an online environment. It will need to be adapted because the Universe is different, but smart, strategic planners within the agency will know exactly how to convert the Print version into a beautiful and inspiring Website.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA** Before anything else, you should open and register a social media account. You need to secure your username on everything in the Universe of communication, even if you don't use it at this point (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram,

MySpace, etc.). Afterward, you need to create cover pages, descriptions and thumb icons; everything should be derived from the general Creative Message and visuals.

- **WEB BANNERS** These are similar in content and visual impact to the Outdoor tools; they need to be smart in a way that draws attention and to communicate the needed “call to action.” These will be used in online marketing campaigns.

TV and RADIO

- **TV ADS** The creative message is now developed, and you just need to keep going in the same direction. Making a TV ad will be fun because this Universe of communication offers a lot of technical possibilities for communication and conveyance. The content will take the form of a Script and a Storyboard, and its success will depend on the production team and elements: the director, the camera crew, the lighting crew, the sound crew, casting, actors, make-up artists, special effects, post-production, 3D animated illustrations.

- **RADIO SPOTS** This is a more peculiar universe. Making a radio advertisement is one of the most creatively demanding processes. First of all, you lack the visual element, which complicates things quite a lot. Second of all, using only voices and sounds narrows down the possibilities to be unique; there are a lot of industry clichés (phone conversations, anchorman announcements, two people dialogs). The creative message will be implemented as content within a radio storyboard that will describe, in addition to the script, the types of voices, the acting directions and tonality and all that needs to be used by the voice actors.

OUTDOOR and INDOOR

- **BILLBOARDS** In the outdoor Universe of communication, you need short, clear, memorable and impact-driven tools and messages. As is the case with printed flyers, the time in which you need to deliver the information is very short. You have

around 2 seconds to say what you have to say in order for the Potential Customer to pay attention or stay focused. In general, the outdoor Universe is used for awareness and trust building. The same goes with all other OOH vehicles (Out Of Home) – public transportation and transit or waiting locations, whether these are indoors or outdoors.

ANYTHING ELSE that you may need

Of course, your type of business has special TOOLS that need to be developed. For example, you may need layouts or solutions for branded company cars, or exhibition tents or any other additional tools. Everything needs to be done using the same creative idea and direction that you've agreed upon, both **visually** (design) and in terms of **content** (copywriting).

Well, we have reached the end of this 3rd “Brands Come True” Module. Let's review what we've discovered:

- We established the way we should **choose a specialized agency** that will do the creative work and develop our TOOLS.
- We found out what we need to prepare in advance before starting to look for an agency: **budgets, desired objectives and deadlines.**
- We talked about **how to find** the perfect agency and whether to use more than one agency (for example, a general branding agency that acts as a contractor for other highly specialized agencies).
- We've talked about **briefing your agency** and how this process could work, so that you are even more prepared.
- We also talked about **how you should decide** on the right solutions for you and your company. Some of the instruments that will make your decision-making process easier are agency argumentations, a decision committee and establishing deadlines for yourself.
- Finally, we talked about the TOOLS that will be generated as tangibles. We divided all the TOOLS into 2 categories: **IDENTITY DNA** and **CREATIVE DNA** tools. In the first category we included

- the **verbal identity** tools - naming and tagline
- the **visual identity** tools - logo, stationaries and other applications, along with the packaging design solution

In the second category we put

- the **creative message** materialized in a **Print Ad**
- the **content** of the creative message, implemented in
 - **PRINT:** flyers, leaflets, brochures
 - **ON-LINE:** website, social media, web banners
 - **TV and RADIO** spots
 - **OUTDOOR** and **INDOOR** tools

In the next “Brands Come True” Module, we will talk about how to use all these TOOLS for (re)launching your new branding process.

Start branding the right, logical and healthy way

Module Introduction

You'll start branding and you won't ever stop

It really doesn't matter if your company is 2 months old or 20 years old. If you decide that you need a clearer way to do business, start thinking of everything through a brand manager's eyes and see how that will help you out, quite considerably.

- **You'll be less stressed out.** – Branding provides a clear path that needs to be followed. That is very comforting because you now have a validating argument to help you decide on everything that needs to be done in order for your company to be more **successful**, more **powerful** and more **lucrative**.

- **Your employees will know what you want.** – By making use of internal branding activities, you'll get your employees in sync with your business vision and goals. Everybody will push the company in the same direction because everybody will now know where you're heading.
- **You'll know exactly when to adjust.** – Again, there are no guarantees to achieving full success. Branding correctly will provide the needed context for you to achieve your goals, but it will also be a good indicator of when things need to be steered in the right direction.
- **You'll build real, valuable relationships with your Customers.** – Besides getting people to buy your Product, the most efficient and effective way of doing business is to have Loyal Clients who not only buy from you time and time again but also promote and play a part in the branding process, whenever needed. They will admire and then respect you, and, in the end, they **will love you** because of the way you or your Product improves their life.

Branding is like following a religion of business. You'll always know whether what you are doing is right or wrong because you believe in your way of doing business and your way of living the life of your business. You will not stop believing in Branding on Tuesdays or any other Monday. You will keep Branding because you now understand what it means and that it brings Peace and Harmony to your Company.

Everything your company does could be branding (if you want it to be)

Is it marketing? Is it advertising? Is it PR? Or is it Branding? What is it? How do I know when to do marketing and when I should do Branding?

We cannot say that Branding is everything. Marketing is not Branding. Advertising is not Branding.

What we can definitely say is:

BRANDING IS IN EVERYTHING.

- **In the business strategy** – As you've already seen when talking about the reasons why you should start a certain business, in addition to the business vision that helps clarify your business model, find a Product and state a Value Proposition, branding helps

generate the right INGREDIENTS so as to create everything you need in order to communicate with your Clients, your employees, your partners and suppliers.

- **In the production (operations) department** – In the 2nd “Brands Come True” Module, we talked about choosing a business that you love and are good at. We also said that you should know as much as possible about how to make your Product or Service better than your Competitors’. For you to achieve that, you need to find the one special thing that sets you apart as a game changer. This will probably turn out to be your Value Proposition: the answer to “Why should anyone buy your Product?” This branding attitude positively interferes with the production process because it makes you develop the right mindset to find that final argument, to fire off that gun that sets you and your Product apart. You need to have your Vision statement clearly stated, and you need to adopt the right mindset to be able to make the Product evolve at this stage.

- **In marketing** – No marketing activities can occur without the right Tools. You cannot even decide on the Universes in which your marketing activities will take place without considering branding. All the 7 P's in marketing (Product, Prices, Promotion, Place, Packaging, Positioning, People) are influenced by branding. You cannot decide on any of these without it.
- **In sales** – We've talked about how the Sales Talk needs to be TRANSLATED using the creative message as an Umbrella for its content. It also uses the Business Vision that projects your dreams for the Company's Success. Branding is the perfect Sales Booster because it takes into account not only Purchases, but also the long-term relationships that truly achieve success for your Company.
- **In advertising** – As in marketing, advertising without branding input is just plain, simple Sales Announcements. Again, Sales is not the only thing that will help you survive. You often hear people talking about Branding Campaigns. These are, in fact, advertising campaigns that promote Creative

Messages constructed around Brand Values or intentions aimed at awareness. The company that invests in such campaigns wants people to know constantly what they are doing and what they stand for.

- **In Public Relations** – You’ve probably heard that PR is all about the company’s reputation. How does a PR department do that without the help of branding strategies? It starts by establishing the tone of the Product’s voice as foundation and guidance when addressing the Public and communicating the right Positioning, so that, ultimately, branding stands out as helping PR in its activities, setting the tone and keeping the rhythm, just like a conductor does for his orchestra.
- **In accountancy and financial** – Do you have investors? Do you have shareholders? Let’s forget about the fact that branding generates value for the company, the fact that the brand around your Product is an asset. Branding is a wonderful tool that generates the best prices from suppliers, the best payment or collaboration conditions. These lead to

financial value. Branding, again, is not a cost, but an investment. One that is more than worth the trouble.

- **In the Human Resources department** – The people that help you run the company, the ones making the Product, are the reason your Company exists. You'll always be the most important piece in the Puzzle, but you alone will not make your company the best in your line of business. Only by working together with people better than you, people that trust you and your Business Vision, will you achieve all that you've set out to do. There are scientific studies proving that the brand of the company and its internal branding activities, those oriented towards the employees, are the best motivators in attracting and keeping talented people working for your company.

As a business owner, you shouldn't worry about all the industry details. Marketers, advertisers and branding professionals have different opinions in their own areas of responsibility. Who's more important within a company, what activities are subordinated to which department, who should take the blame if things go wrong: these are not

questions for the most important person in the business and the visionary behind the Product.

What every business owner needs to understand and concern himself with is that if ALL ACTIVITIES performed by your Company are filtered and enhanced by a branding attitude, you will earn a true, strong and valuable Brand.

As we discussed in the 1st “Brands Come True” Module,

Brands don't just happen. they are the result of planned processes.

*And when I say **ALL** I mean all.*

I'll give you just **10 examples** so that you get the idea. To make this whole process a little harder, we're not going to mention any traditional branding done in joint venture with marketing or advertising departments.

1. **New colleague welcome box** – Although this type of activity is very important for recruitment and HR retention, many companies forget about it. The

process itself is called either on-boarding or induction, but in non-technical words it is just a way of setting up a proper Welcome for your new colleague and employee. For a new employee, the first day in your company is a very important one. No new colleague will feel comfortable in a new environment, so why not just make it fun? Consider the welcome box like a gift in which your new arrivals receive everything they need in order to fit in:

- Access key or credentials (passwords)
- The company mobile
- Keys for the company car
- A company mug personalized with the new employee's name
- A funny T-shirt
- The Rule Book for having Fun in the Company
- The Company directory – Why should anyone wait a month to find out the name of a cute colleague?
- Put in **anything** that feels important to you so that you create a positive emotional context for that person to start appreciating, respecting and loving

your company. Yes, this is valid also for employees. If you produce Prune Juice, put 10 bottles of it in the welcome box. Remember that your most powerful ambassadors are your employees. And this has the potential of being the beginning of a beautiful brand experience for that employee. If an employee says bad things about the company, people will believe him more than they would any unsatisfied customer, and you don't want that.

2. **Invoicing** – Issuing invoices for your Clients either digitally (from an e-commerce site) or in any other format is a cold, plain and official procedure. Why shouldn't it be fun and informative? If it suits your company Personality, bring fun elements into the invoice: you could make a monthly industry joke or make fun of yourself in a smart way. If you, for example, sell monthly services based on consumed volumes (hosting, maintenance, electricity, water, etc.), you could offer tips for saving. Yes, teach your clients how to get lower costs, how to make better use of your service. You will not lose money. You will

win happy and loyal customers. Invest in the design of the invoice. Make it easy to understand. There is an entire User Experience philosophy that you can apply to turn your invoice into a branding activity.

3. **Client Care anniversary letter** – Why not send a Happy Birthday card to your Customers? Most businesses already have some customers who have been loyal for the long run. They've been buying Products from you for years now. How do you communicate your appreciation to them? Write them a personalized letter or card. You know their names. You know what they buy most. Use that information to create a company-client moment, one that is nice and sincere. Don't overdo it.
4. **Employee Cafeteria communication** – Make this place theirs. Don't over brand it, and let them feel good, appreciated, respected and loved. It works both ways. You could also express your general attitude, your gratitude and enthusiasm for their work, in a symbolic way. Make it fun: put out flowers, install free coffee machines, have someone bring the

milk for them, let them play the music they want from a fun, new jukebox.

5. **Instructions for using the Product** – That little pamphlet can be such a powerful tool if you insert branding attitude into it. Make it so easy that your grandma would feel happy assembling or using your Product. Yes, we know you have to put mandatory information on it, but you can still make it interesting. Put more pictures or illustrations and invest in making it all, content and image, look really clear and helpful.
6. **Recruiting Advertisement** – Don't just create "We're hiring" Ads. Think in terms of Creative messages as well, whenever you need to place HR advertisements on professional websites. If you can invest in creative ads that help you communicate Product values for People who want to buy, why not communicate company benefits and what you are looking for in a creative and memorable manner?
7. **Celebrating a Key Partner** – We now know, after analyzing the role of key partners and suppliers in our business model, that these companies are

essential to our success on the market. As with of loyal Customers, communicate your appreciation. Don't assume that by paying them or by being their business partner, you are doing enough. Go the extra mile and send a Thank You note and a Gift Basket when your Partner is celebrating 5 years of helping you achieve your Goals. You'll be positively surprised by their reactions.

8. **The lobby waiting room** – When you have clients or any kind of people waiting, you should put yourself in their shoes. How would that experience feel to you? Experience it. Do you like it? When sitting on the sofa in the lobby entrance hall, what are you experiencing? Is the sofa comfortable? Are you staring at a blank wall? Do you have a guest Wi-Fi password on hand so that those waiting are able to log in and check their e-mail? How does the room smell? What about putting some nice fresh flowers in there? Why not fill a presentation shelf in the lobby with all your products?
9. **"Sorry, we messed it up!" letter** – Most companies, when unfortunate events occur, want to sweep them

quickly under the carpet and hide the unfortunate events. First of all, any proven, negative fact together with feedback is a blessing because it provides the valuable opportunity to make it better. Second of all, you should always concentrate first on helping the Customer and solving his problem at all costs. If a Product replacement will fix the situation, then provide one for free, since it was your company's fault. Along with that, apologize sincerely and in a personal fashion. Don't let messages on the answering machine do the job. Do it with feeling and because you mean it. Don't do it just to win your Client back (that may still be impossible) but because it's the right thing to do.

10. **Answering the company's phone** – This is one of the simplest and easiest actions and a way to turn an apparently redundant action into a one worth branding. Specialists in customer phone calls are always smiling on the phone. Of course, no Client calling will see the smile, but he will definitely hear it and feel it during the conversation. It needs to be real and sincere. How can you have your people

answering the phone do that? Well, keep them happy and motivated.

Yes, branding requires an investment.

You can do some of the activities at a low cost just by using your common sense business attitude, but the really important ones, those where you are investing in the future of your company, require professional assistance. Branding activities themselves need investment of time, resources and energy. For what's worth it, you'll get 10 times your investment. Not in cash, but in financial gains (economies, better deals, lower conversion costs, etc.).

Yes, branding is a permanent process.

As long as your company exists, your care for branding should never cease to exist. If your brand is the soul of your company, then it's not as if you can drop it or leave it at home when it rains, can you? The same happens with your day-to-day principles, those that you need to follow constantly, not only when it seems suitable, such as on

Tuesdays. As already mentioned, branding is a healthy business philosophy that should guide you throughout your whole business life, not only on certain occasions.

In reality, it is better not to start branding at all than to stop and come back to the idea after some time. Once you get your Customers used to a branding stream carrying the message of your Product, they will want it constantly. If you stop it, then you'll lose them. By not branding, you'll still lose them, but not as abruptly.

Well?

Will the TOOLS work?

In this lesson, we will focus on how to implement results by tracking the TOOLS that we are using in our communication.

In order to get better results one day after the next, you need to have data. The same goes for becoming more effective, more efficient.

- **“Effective”** means having communication actions bring you **sales results**, at the very least.
- **“Efficient”** means getting these results without a great loss of **time or effort**.

We will also look at which elements of the communication and branding set of activities you should be interested in.

What should you be tracking?

How will you know if your TOOLS work?

PEOPLE REACHED

Are your TOOLS getting to the people they were targeted for?

Even if you decided on the right Universes to offer you this reach, you should still try to implement tracking systems to verify that this is actually happening. It doesn't mean that your agency or the owner of a certain Universe (a TV station, for example) is lying to you. It is just that there are so many contexts in the communication industry, and some Universes can be unpredictable.

IMPACT

If your TOOLS are reaching the right people, are they also demanding attention? Do people understand the message? Does it make them want to try your Product?

After all the testing in focus groups and marketing research, there is still a chance that, in reality, the message will not attract people. Perhaps they will not understand it. You, as a

business owner, should always pay attention so that if this happens, you will be aware as soon as it does.

SALES

If they get the message, if they understand it, do they ultimately go and BUY the Product?

Or, do they just get the joke, laugh and forget about the ad?

Remember that although MONEY is not the dream that you need to pursue, you still need SALES in order to achieve success.

CLIENT ACTIONS AFTER SALES

What happens after they have bought the Product or acquired the Service?

- **POSITIVE** – They are excited by their experience with it. Will they buy it again? Will they promote your Product to their family and friends?
- **NEUTRAL** – They are okay with the Product, but they did not fall in love with it. Perhaps they didn't need it so much. Perhaps they weren't paying attention to it.

What can you do to get them excited? How can you reveal the “coolness” of the Product to them?

- **NEGATIVE** – They hated it. Were they offended by something? Can you apologize to them? Can you fix their problem with your Product? Will they talk to others about their bad experience? What will you do? How will you handle this so that it doesn’t get blown out of proportion?

Branding Tools evolve inside the designated Universes

We are talking about Universes in which you will communicate. There will be offline and online Universes that you’ll be using as part of your Communication strategy.

The offline Universes include direct marketing, telesales, direct mailing, events, sampling sessions, television and radio advertisements and teleshopping (both at a national and local level), among others.

The online Universes include websites, your blog and the blogs of other people (influencers), web banners on websites other than yours (online magazines and news sources), online Ad Systems (like Google AdWords) and social media.

These Universes are selected by you and your agency, keeping in mind budget, the environments of the people who are or can become interested in you, your Product and your identity (positioning and targeting), and other pragmatic reasons within your Branding Strategy.

The Universes were selected, of course, before starting to build up the TOOLS because each Universe has specific requirements.

As we discussed in the 3rd “Brands Come True” Module, there are two categories of tools: those bearing an **IDENTITY DNA** code and those bearing **CREATIVE DNA**. Well, the DNA that the Universes use is found exclusively in TOOLS from the latter category – deliverables that contain the creative message and different types of correspondent content.

Inside this Creative DNA category of TOOLS, we will be talking about **INBOUND** and **OUTBOUND** Tools and Universes, depending on the way each of them interacts and communicates with and to the Public.

The difference between **OUTBOUND** and **INBOUND**

Perhaps it sounds too technical, but we need to get to know these terms because they are part of the entire communication process.

To fully understand the comparison between the two, we'll be analyzing them side by side:

<u>OUTBOUND</u>	<u>INBOUND</u>
It's a form of communication that interrupts someone's flow of activity in order to draw attention to itself.	On the other side, inbound tries to get along with the Client, walking side by side, talking to him and interacting in a sympathetic and interesting way.
INTERRUPT	ATTRACT
ONE WAY communication (the Company is the only one "speaking")	TWO WAY communication
Message: "I am the Jam Factory. Buy my Jar!"	Message: "Hi! Would you like to learn how to make Strawberry Jam? Look at how we do it!"
SPECIFIC TOOLS and UNIVERSES	
1 ON 1 COMMUNICATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Telemarketing• Email blasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Content Generation• Blogging

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • Paid Email Lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters to opt-in e-mail lists
MASS COMMUNICATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV and Radio Ads • Print Ads • Interstitial Pages • Display Ads • Billboards and Outdoor • Web banners • Pop-up and Pop-Under Advertising • Social Media Advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of Mouth and Viral Marketing • Online Videos (as content) • Community building • Influencers outreach • Authoring Books • Earned Social Media • SEO/SEM
PR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throwaway Press Releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press and Public Relations
EVENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradeshows • Product launch events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinar • Public Speaking
Powered by: BUDGETS and REPETITION	Powered by: CREATIVITY and EFFORT
Higher than average costs in order to get a new customer	Lower than average costs to get a new customer
Costs remain generally static in scale	Generates momentum, making future efforts easier, interactive and more productive now and in the long run

So, which one you should choose?

We may be challenged by some communication professionals to say “Outbound is bad, inbound is good!” or “Outbound is old, inbound is new!” Don’t think of communication in these terms. **You need both!**

Yes, inbound activities create a relationship with the Customer closer to the branding strategy that we strive for, closer to the idea of generating Admiration, Respect and Love for our Brand. Nevertheless, outbound actions are more predictable in generating Sales.

All through the “Brands Come True” Modules, we have told you that MONEY is not the reason you should do business. We don’t take that back when we say that you also need to be pragmatic. You need MONEY to achieve everything you want and see in your Business Vision, no matter how moral and ethical that is.

If you only do INBOUND activities, then you may lack the needed volume in sales for a few months. You need to wait for people to trust you, admire you and buy from you.

If you only do OUTBOUND activities, then you’ll lack the connection and emotional reasoning that will bring you the Clients that you will be able to rely on. You will probably sell your Products to price hunters and opportunity seekers, not to people who will ever qualify as loyal. This means that you cannot plan ahead; you cannot really become effective from

the get-go, since converting new customers or maintaining the relationship with them will be something that you achieve gradually.

Your communication strategy needs to be constructed in such a way that you can benefit from both types of Universes. You need to integrate both in your plan of activities.

How do you do the result tracking within these Universes?

We will quickly go through all the types of Universes that you will be using so that we can have clear examples of how tracking is done for each and every one of them. The examples we will detail below are not the only means of performing tracking. Your agency and the other professionals can, perhaps, bring you even more innovative methods.

So, let's get an idea of which method is best for you to create a **traceable action**.

PRINT

- **QR codes** are printed inside the layout of a magazine ad spread sheet (for example). These are symbols specially generated to embed a link to your site or to a certain page. This square-shaped symbol is scanned by the readers with the use of their smartphones, generating instant access to that specific web page, your page, without manually entering a long URL website address. QR codes can offer you an exact metric of the success of your Print Ad. You will find out how many people are using that QR code at any given time and other interesting information (who they are in terms of demographics, what they did on the site – did they buy anything?). The QR codes offer you a means of converting certain customers into your customers, on the spot. It will not give you the exact number of people that have read the Ad or the total amount of purchases generated by the Ad. It offers you another means of tracking some of the results generated by the Print Media.

- **Product Sample** – Along with your Ad, you can include a small sample of your Product or, if your Product cannot be scaled to small, print-size dimensions, you can insert it as a promotional gift, alone or together with a Product related to it. For example, if you sell cars, inside the magazine, you could put a Car freshener with the message “Do you remember how a new car smells?” How can you track it? You could make a social media campaign in which you ask everybody who got that car freshener to take a picture of it inside their car and post it on a social media network (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr or Instagram). Tell them that if they add the hashtag #mycarsmellsnew, you’ll give them a 5% discount on a certain model.
- **Discount with the Ad** - Speaking of discounts, inside the Ad, you can print a call-to-action message that will entice people by telling them that if they come to your store with the Ad or with the coupon found inside, they’ll get something for free or at an appealing discount.

- **Unique contact details** – If you want to see if the Ad works, you can also use a more empirical tracking method. You could place a phone number that you'll only give out through print ads. If you get phone calls on that number from people wanting or inquiring about your Product, then the process works.
- **Direct mail** - You can easily track your direct mail campaign by creating a subpage, a landing page with a personalized and unique web page address that is dedicated to this type of campaign and tracks your visitors to that page.

ONLINE

In this Universe, things are much more evolved, in terms of tracking and analytic systems and technologies, than in almost any other Universe of communication.

Even if you don't own an e-commerce site that will allow you to know exactly if a visitor (who came to your site from a web banner on a certain website) does or does not buy your Product, you can still generate leads and find out a lot of data about visitors that will help you in your future communication decisions.

- **Special landing pages** – Your online marketing actions will most definitely lead visitors to your site (the media seller of your website). The most common mistake in this process is that many companies direct the people who clicked on their web-banner to their homepage. It may seem logical, but you can do better than this. You can create special landing pages as the destination for each type of tool within the online Universe so that you have accurate data regarding who visits your site and the site that directed him to yours.
- **A/B testing** – This means that you'll do at least two versions of landing pages or web banners (maybe even more than two). Perhaps you'll change only the headline, or the call-to-action message or the colors. Afterwards, you'll check to see which one gets you more results.
- **Contact Form** – This is one of the easiest ways of tracking your branding efforts. You could ask people to write down their favorite dairy product (if you're selling a dairy product) and randomly choose some of the participants to win a prize of your own

Products so they can taste them. You could also ask them to sign up for your newsletter and, in that way, start building a relationship. You could also simply ask them write down their contact details if they are interested in having a look when your Product is being launched, and, from this, you will grow a big database of people who are well-targeted, since they already wish to know more about you as a Product, service or brand.

TELEVISION

In this case, audience tracking is done by third party companies that monitor ratings of TV stations within a designated geographical region.

You will get data in the form of figures regarding the amount of people who watched your TV commercial, their age group and their location info.

You can still implement some tracking techniques of your own. Remember that, like Radio and Outdoor Universes, Television represents an OUTBOUND universe that interrupts the Person without notice. What your Product

needs is what the customer will remember easily: devices that require a limited attention span.

- **Unique contact details** – These work in some cases, especially if you choose to make use of teleshopping commercials.
- **SMS tracking** – If you're in the fundraising business, this is a nice tool to implement on TV in order to see if your technique generates donations.
- **Social Media hashtagging** – You can announce the hashtag during the TV spot and see how many people access it or use it.

RADIO

This is also a hard Universe to track. Nevertheless, it is an important Universe that influences a significant part of the sales communication process.

- **Unique contact details** – Dress them up with a call-to-action message like "Call **this number** now to make an appointment!"

- **Social Media hashtagging** – You can also communicate this on Radio, if it's simple enough and if it suits the creative audio message overall.
- **Contests** – You can have your Radio station organize a competition during which they promote an announcement about your Product and then the audience is asked a question related to the radio spot. If someone gets the answer right, they will be rewarded with a discount or with the Product itself.

OUTDOOR

Except for using **unique contact details** and **Social Media hashtagging**, there aren't many other tracking methods. Outdoor is a very powerful instrument that helps to remind people about the existence of the Product and build up Trust in it.

What you can do is enhance the TOOLS inside the OUTDOOR Universe so that they become viral and transcend to other Universes just because they are interesting, daring and unique. You have likely seen unconventional or guerilla-style OUTDOOR advertising that made an impact on Social Media and ONLINE universes.

Perhaps you still cannot track the OUTDOOR elements, but you can definitely track their impact in these contexts.

IN-STORE

The best tracking coordinate here is the sales reports themselves, so you don't need to implement any other additional tools. What you can do, though, is to try to enhance the impact that your communication has inside the public environment where your Product is displayed, inside the store.

Using displays, having very attractive packaging or a high-quality shelf placement (merchandising) is very good. What else can you do inside stores?

Whether you have your own store for the sole purpose of selling your Products or you use resellers (other stores), you can still do the following:

- **Sampling** – If your Product is suited for this option, give the potential Customers a chance to try it. You can have a representative who hands out the Sample of your Product and answers questions related to the

Product, as well as presenting benefits or Product Value Propositions

- **Product Demos** – In some cases, seeing how your Product works can be very captivating for the Customers. These are interesting and fun to watch and they also provide the needed visual insurance that the customers will not have any unpleasant surprises, since they've just seen what the Product can do and how it behaves.
- **Cross-marketing** – If you can get these kind of partnerships going, they can bring you a lot of exposure. For example, if you're selling coconut cooking oil, try to offer the samples for free with every cooking pan sold.
- **In-store promotions** – This is the extremely enticing version of "Buy 2, and you'll get another 1 free." We've already told you that bribing your Customers or provoking Price-related buying decisions are unhealthy ways of getting Sales. Still, there are contexts in which, if handled professionally in an integrated and strategic fashion, these types of

actions can be considered Client Retention and Loyalty Rewarding activities.

- **After-purchase lottery or rewards** – These activities have two major advantages:

- o They provide an **immediate reward** for the client who has just bought your Product, which may, in some cases, induce Loyalty.
- o They build up relevant **client data intelligence** – You'll have a list of people who bought your Product, who made the effort to take part in the raffle and who **agreed to leave you** their personal information in exchange for that reward. What can you do with this data? First of all, you should use it for Client Care purposes: you should call the clients after a week and ask their opinion of your Product. How was their experience with it?

You shouldn't use this data for spamming or for up-selling (calling them and trying to convince them to buy more) because it's too aggressive, and, ultimately, you don't want those kind of feelings associated with you.

Lesson Conclusion

As you've seen so far, there are Universes that are hard to track. But not having a tracking system implemented in one Universe doesn't mean that the specific Universe and the TOOLS performing within it will be useless or inefficient. Remember that what you hope to achieve in a communication campaign is not just Sales, but also Awareness and the Building of Trust.

The intention to purchase can grow in people in more than one step and in more than one way:

- If people see your Product in a **TV commercial**, they might not buy it the next day. They will remember it though.
- Then, they'll see it on an **Billboard**,
- Then, they'll hear about it, while driving, in a **Radio** ad.
- Then, they'll read an article on an **influencer's blog**.
- Then, they'll click on a **web banner** on a news website.
- They'll get to your **website**.
- They'll read the **content** (the sales talk).

- Then, they'll ask friends on Facebook (**reputation, social media**).
- Then, they'll see the **Store display**.
- They will look for the Product on the shelf (**merchandising**).
- They will check it out personally, take it in their hands and analyze and read the **packaging**.
- Then, after another week, they'll buy it.

Well? Who's responsible for the Purchase? Which TOOL in which UNIVERSE? Did they all contribute to creating that Sale?

Of course they did.

Ready? Go!

Good Luck. We all need it!

Are you ready?

Yes, you are!

We are not going to give you the ultimate reason, expressed in the line **“Perfect is the enemy of good.”** (This quote is attributed to Voltaire, a famous French writer).

You really are ready!

You have the best TOOLS, because they are made out of the best INGREDIENTS you could have provided. These Ingredients are the most sincere expression of your passion, the grounds for your decision to choose your business journey.

It is like giving a chef the best ingredients to prepare a soup for your guests. You’ve tasted the soup, you like it. You’ve decided that it’s worthy of being sold in your restaurant.

So, the agency gave you tasty TOOLS. Let’s start using them in the Universes that were chosen as the environments dedicated to communication.

Launching a new Product or a new communication campaign for your Brand is like making a fire. You've gathered the right wood and made a safe foundation. Now you need to have someone keep watch on it. A fire can be helpful (it provides light and warmth), but also destructive (it burns).

Your launching campaign will run simultaneously on different Universes. You need to keep your eyes on all media of communication. Your agency will do that for you, but I think you should also have someone who represents your company – your own agency for branding purposes or your own specially designed department.

Anyway, remember that there are no guarantees that this will prevent you from failing. It will, though, increase your chances of success.

THE PLAN

We are talking, of course, about the plan of activities in terms of branding, marketing, PR and advertising. You'll have this in the form of an Activity Plan with dates, milestones, tools needed for each Universe in which you're communicating, and people responsible for each activity.

The aces in your pocket should be those activities that replace or enhance other actions in that same plan. What if

you succeed in creating a viral sensation from your TV spot on YouTube? How will you handle it? How can you boost its impact? Should you do an online follow up? Should you reprioritize your investments from the Outdoor budget to the YouTube advertisement channel?

This plan can be outlined in an Excel file, a Basecamp project or a Gant calendar. Ask your agency for whatever format you feel comfortable with.

This Plan is part of the **MAP** that your Brand will follow in order to get stronger and more valuable. Each action is a **STEP** towards the **DESTINATION** that your Business Vision is describing.

THE TEAM

Even if you are involved in all stages of development of the communication plan and branding strategy, you don't need to be a constant and persistent presence.

You, as a business owner, are the greatest asset of your Company. Even if handling the communication (branding, marketing, advertising, PR) for your Company is an important task, you are more valuable in managing the

company and only supervising this set of essential actions than in getting involved in making your communication campaign happen.

What are these essential actions?

- **Testing** – Before launching, and even after launching, TOOLS and instruments will need to be improved even further; inevitably, there will be some things that you'll only be aware of later in the process.
- **Monitoring** – Are the tools performing well? Are the Universes providing the needed realities?
- **Adjusting** – The best results in efficiency and effectiveness are achieved through constant, on-the-spot adjustments so that the best approach inside a specific Universe is accomplished. A planned and approved plan of activities that is not constantly adjusted to real facts and results is an illogical and inefficient plan, even if it generally brings about the required results.
- **Trend watching** – All Universes inside which your company communicates are sensitive to outside

contexts (economic, social, demographic). Things can be inappropriate in one Universe and very interesting in another; what was once not suited to your needs, may become interesting and useful again. Real-time marketing and branding is a very cost effective way of taking advantage of those new situations that arise. Because of this, real-time marketing and opportunity media investments need to be taken into consideration.

- **Reporting and Analyzing Results** – Another important step in getting the best results possible within your budget and industry is to be aware of what works and what doesn't work that well for you. You will need to make decisions for future investments in communication based on these reports.
- **Managing and controlling** – Who will have a bird's eye view of everything that happens with your branding process and environments? You are not the answer. You are the business owner, not the brand manager. Would you perform surgery on yourself?

- **Evolving** - Everything must evolve, in terms of communication TOOLS and creating new experiences.

So, as you can see, there are a lot of activities involved in your new branding and communication activities.

You shouldn't be responsible for them or, if you are, do so for only a short while. Again, you should have professionals take care of these.

Who are these professionals?

The best, proven way of working with professionals on your branding and communication activities is to combine the best of **two** worlds:

1. As a business owner, you'll have **your agency** taking care of these tasks. You should ask and be convinced that things are taking place in a dynamic fashion on their side – don't assume that they are. Put everything down in a contract. Here is where part of your monthly budget for recurrent activities is directed and spent — agency maintenance fees.

2. In time, you should get an in-house team. This is not for purposes of having control over the agency that you've hired, but more for the constant support required for those activities which point to and help the Branding process being performed for your Company: sales figures, new launchings, intelligence, etc. The in-house team will also be the one receiving technical reports, leads, immediate action requests and so on. This team can be your own marketing and communication **department** (internal) or your own **branding agency** (specialised externals).

Basically, communication and branding is not a "Do It Yourself" type of activity. You'll be convinced of this after going through the 3rd Lesson of this Module, where we talk about tracking results, and the 5th "Brands Come True" Module, where we talk in further detail about how to help your branding processes evolve.

FINAL BUSINESS CHECKLIST

Although I don't want to annoy you with all the safety measures, I think it's better for you to be prepared, rather than end up ruining your hard work (the work of creating

the INGREDIENTS and investing in the TOOLS) by not paying attention to details. Last but not least, not everything needs to be perfect. We are just trying to minimize the risk of failing. There are no guarantees that this will prevent you from failing. It will, though, increase your chances of success.

Do you have enough money to invest in the launching and ongoing branding, marketing and advertising activities?

We've already talked about deciding on the budgets:

- The Budget for developing the creative TOOLS
- The Budget for Launching
- The Budget for Monthly Activities
- The Budget for Continuous Evolution and Management

You should have everything prepared. Merely launching the Communication Campaign for selling your Product will not be enough for you to generate sales or, furthermore, to achieve success.

Do you have enough stock? Can you serve all scenarios? When will you get stuck and how will you solve that situation?

We also talked about this in the 2nd “Brands Come True” Module, when we drew up the business model. There is a chance that your sales expectation won't be met. Perhaps you'll sell your Products at a slower pace. This is basically the same managerial discomfort that you may experience with the opposite context, when your Products are being sold faster than expected, and you don't have enough Products to replace the store stock. The disappointment of those customers who have been convinced to buy your Product but cannot find it on the shelves will be a bitter situation that you can rarely sweeten.

Don't be super optimistic and have **A LOT** of reserve stock, but don't have **ZERO STOCK** either.

Is your distribution bullet proof? What about the revenue streams?

As you check the essential parts of your business model, you should also test and check these two sets of activities: How much time do you need to get your product to the

store? Is the money coming back to you quickly enough that you don't get blocked by lack of cash flow?

Is your Product in stores? Is it available for your Customers? Is it on the shelves?

There are contexts in which companies begin their communication campaigns with regional coverage and their Products aren't found in the stores mentioned. Why would you tell me to buy your Product, but not have it in stores? Yes, it happens, and I am not talking about small companies, but huge ones.

TESTING AND LAUNCHING

One more step. Check your communication TOOLS again. Is everything printed? Is it distributed where it needs to be? Is everything working online? Do you have the right contact details on the flyers and on the TV spot? Can people reach you? Is your customer care phone working?

Ok. Go for it! Launch your Communication. Start the branding process.

Godspeed!

This is the end of the 4th “Brands Come True” Module. All the discussed details, even if slightly technical, brought you to the position in which you are aware that branding and communication actions are extremely important for your business. I am trying not to make you an expert in DOING but an expert in DECIDING the best course of action when talking about these two areas / business coordinates (branding and communication). You have now a clear image of

- The **Branding attitude** that needs to be present in all **activities** of your business. Starting from your business strategy and operations, continuing with marketing, advertising and PR and finishing with Accounting and Human Resources.
- We exemplified **10 contexts** that prove that branding, as a mind-set, is a productive way of doing everything related to your Business.
- We’ve also stated that even if branding requires investment, a process that is **ongoing**, it is

nevertheless essential for achieving real business success (sales, reputation, trust, power, loyalty).

- We talked about having a dynamic attitude about branding and communication so that we can bring **effectiveness and efficiency** into our actions.
- We underlined the need for tracking results, and we identified the elements needed to track our TOOLS inside the communication UNIVERSES:
 - People reach
 - Impact
 - Sales
 - After-sales actions of the client
- We've clarified the difference between OUTBOUND and INBOUND Universes, and we concluded that both are needed in order to help our company become more successful and powerful and generate more money.
- We've analyzed certain tracking techniques for each major communication Universe, and we've figured out that the absence of accurate tracking doesn't help us qualify a Universe as helpful or not.

- As a conclusion, we know now that all Universes, if used correctly and in an integrated manner, have their own part in creating the almighty SALE. Additionally, all of them make a difference and contribute to achieving appreciation, respect and love for our Product.
- We have once again gone through all aspects that precede the launching of a Communication campaign for an existing brand or for an emerging one:
 - The plan of activities to take place
 - The mixed team (an agency team and an internal team) that will handle all related essential activities (testing, monitoring, adjusting, trend watching, reporting, analyzing, managing, controlling, evolving), keeping everything in place so that the TOOLS can perform as expected.
- We've reviewed our final business checklist detailing product stocks, distribution channels and revenue streams.
- We've launched our Communication Campaign using the TOOLS developed on the basis of the unique

business INGREDIENTS that will perform within our designated UNIVERSES.

The continuous evolution of your branding activities

Module Introduction

Make it better than the day before.

You are now in the middle of a Communication Process for your Company. The set of actions in which your TOOLS are involved empower your Brand more and more each day, if things work as planned.

You need to know that you cannot control everything, that you cannot predict all the potential events that will occur in your business's existence and, implicitly, in your Product's existence.

In some cases, even if you've taken all the right steps and made sure that each needed action was properly performed, your company may still end up as a failure or a poor success.

I'm not trying to persuade you to believe that failure can happen easily or that it should to be expected. You might find yourself confronted with negative results, unspoken but

implicit coordinates of your business. Nevertheless, you can always steer the business back onto the right track by not being passive and by taking whatever action is needed, when the time is right. In terms of branding and communication, you can prepare in advance and try to be one step ahead of the game, thus avoiding business failure. In the beginning of the 1st “Brands Come True” Module, we talked about how branding will make your company stronger. In the case of preventing failure, this is very true.

Branding doesn't make you invincible. Even the most powerful brands can fail, even if their branding is bulletproof. If you look carefully at the history of brands, at those companies that somehow failed, you'll see that they diminished their success because of poor management and lack of vision. The business segment that makes up the company's strategy is the Achilles' heel.

This is one of the reasons why I preach that business owners should limit their involvement in branding and company communication to leadership roles and not to executive ones.

You have better things to do for your business.

Innovating and evolving your Product and Services continuously are the best things that you can do for your company. There are a lot of examples of companies that fell behind in this area: Blackberry, Yahoo, Nokia and even Microsoft, super brands that are in danger of failing

because they lacked business vision and innovative business approaches. You think Apple is on the safe side? Not necessarily. A super brand needs to evolve constantly in all segments of its business and from all possible perspectives.

Even in branding, we don't need to fall in love with immediate success. This is not the smart attitude. What we need to do is to keep the line, but at the same time build around it, weave a web of new things around it, new approaches, new perspectives. We need to experiment, to play and to have serious fun in growing our own brand and helping our Clients more and more each day.

Expect the best. Prepare for the worse.

In the 3rd “Brands Come True” Module, we talked about establishing our goals before reaching out for a creative agency. This metric (in sales, people reach and awareness indicators) is what your communication campaign and activities need to accomplish under the Branding strategy umbrella.

What can happen?

POSITIVELY

- **You met or even exceeded** the precise figures and expectations issued at the beginning of the communication and branding process, meaning that everything went as expected. You, your team and the agency that is helping you in this adventure did a good job.
- **You got halfway or close** to achieving your goal. It seems that you may have been on the right track, but perhaps you did not adjust the TOOLS or the UNIVERSES quickly enough. The important question here is whether you could have done something in order to achieve your

goals fully. You need a report from the Agency and another one from your internal team. You need to find out if the Communication Plan was carried out to the best of its potential or if the situation could have been better if managed differently.

NEGATIVELY

- **You got nowhere close** to getting there, but you did break even. This is not good. If you got here without meeting the desired goals in the anticipated time frame, then something went wrong.
- **You went deep under**, you lost money and you did not even break even. If you reached this stage, you have quite enough reasons to state that you find yourself and your company in a position of failure.

What you need to do next?

In the case of the first two contexts, the **POSITIVE** ones,

- You need **to continue** to communicate as part of your monthly activities, but also as part of new campaigns that will try to meet another set of specific goals (perhaps on an yearly based budget).
- You need **to evaluate** the TOOLS and those UNIVERSES that brought you your results.

- You need **to analyze** how the results came to be and, especially, the quality of the processes that led to them.
- You need to perform the **client care** procedure in such way that it triggers loyalty and recurrence of sales.
- You need to prepare and execute the **loyalty program** for those clients that gave you their trust as if giving a gift.

In the case of the last two contexts, the **NEGATIVE** ones:

- You need **to revise** the goals – were they unrealistic? (Your agency should have warned you before you stated them as goals. Either you were not paying attention, or you did not receive advice in this respect.)
- You need to find out what happened – more specifically, **why the negative results occurred**:
 - Were the Tools wrongly developed (mistargeted)?
 - Were the Tools mismanaged during the campaign?
 - Did the Universes lack results as far as sales were concerned?
- **Whose fault is it?** This is not for the purpose of blaming someone, but to correct things and set them on the right track, even if this means firing somebody (from within your team or the agency). So, you should hear everybody's

opinion regarding what happened and decide whom to trust. You will have

- Your own opinion
 - Your internal team's report
 - Your agency's analysis
 - Possibly an auditor's advice (a consultant)
- *It is high time to decide if you want to continue at all.* You cannot stop communicating to your Customers if you need sales. That is the first mistake that many business owners make when they need to cut costs – they cancel the marketing and advertising, their entire communication media. These actions don't solve anything; they just slow down the journey to bankruptcy. There are cases in which you should just pause the entire business. You can start all over again, when you have things figured out. At least you are not losing any more money. You still need to ask yourself a lot of questions: Is it the Product? Is it the market? Is my business developing in a bad context?
 - *If you want to continue, then, depending on whose fault it is,*
 - Hire a new brand manager – one that is better, in accordance with your needs and noticed business discomforts.
 - Start looking for a new agency. Look more thoroughly for that new agency! Change the way you search for it. (If, last time, you took the recommendation of a

friend or acquaintance, then, this time, try a more professional approach. Ask around more and pay more attention to the agency's portfolio.)

Start all over – don't redo all the tools. Have the agency put you on the right track, and if, what needs to change are the tools, do it, starting step by step from results and generated income.

What can you do to best avoid failure?

Do everything you need to and what professionals tell you to!

Perhaps one of the most common reasons communication campaigns and branding activities fail is that owners adjust branding-related and promotional actions and by themselves.

They cut some of the actions that they feel are counterproductive, so that the entire campaign or set of activities fits the real budget, the amount they have in the bank. Please, don't do that.

This is why you need to be firm in creating a budget for this process — a real budget that the agency needs as an ingredient to tailor a Campaign with the right TOOLS and within the right UNIVERSES, so that your goals can be achieved.

You trust your agency. If your financials are altered, be sincere. Let **them** adjust the goals and actions.

If the PLAN of actions that the agency creates is modified by the owner or by the internal team, then the agency cannot be held responsible for the lack of results.

For example, there are many business owners that who the Search Engine Optimization monthly fee because they've heard that is a waste of time and money. The agency says it needs to be done in order for you to rank better in the Search Engine results page. The basic reason for this need is that you get more visitors, with the end result that the Products displayed in your e-commerce platform are ultimately sold.

So, do it then!

No one says to pay for something if you don't understand how the mechanism works. Ask for explanations from your team.

In many cases, the right question is not "Do we really need this?" but "How much more do we need to invest in order to double the results?"

Note: In communication (marketing, advertising, PR) there are often contexts in which an investment increase of 30% will get you 100% more results, especially in an online Universe.

Adapting and Adjusting in real time

Which actions are your “Pocket Aces?” I’m referring to those activities that replace or enhance other actions scheduled within the communication plan. What if you succeed in creating a viral sensation with your TV spot on YouTube? How will you handle it? How can you boost the impact? Should you do an online only follow up? Should you reprioritize your investments from the Outdoor budget to the YouTube advertisement channel? This is what adapting means.

An example of adjusting would be the necessity of canceling one advertising channel because it lacks results. If you buy, for example, a web banner placement on a popular website (like the Huffington Post, for example), and you don’t get clicks on that banner, what will your immediate reaction be? You’ll perhaps try to change the content of the web banner, keeping the creative message – if you haven’t already done that in the form of multi-ads (testing five ads and see which one is more successful). You’ll try changing the media plan, the hours when the ads are delivered or the contexts. Eventually, if nothing helps you increase the results, you’ll

probably need to cancel that channel for a certain amount of time. What are the legal implications, and where will you redirect the budget?

Opportunity and flexibility

10% percent of your overall campaign budget should be left free, not attributed to any planned activity. This opportunity budget will be invested with your consensus when favorable and unexpected things occur:

- **New channels** within certain Universes – If Oprah Winfrey is launching a new TV station that directly targets your audience, do you want to be on it? Do you want to take advantage of that? You can afford it with this budget for opportunities.
- **Perfect endorsers** – Now and then, you'll come across occasions when you can book a very popular celebrity, someone very much in fashion (like the winner of the last America's Got Talent or a sports champion). If he or she is in sync with your business values overall, then why not use this promotional value? If he or she can help in generating "buzz," then go for it.
- **Unpredicted cool events** – What if tomorrow a TED event sponsorship position becomes vacant. Will it help you? If the answer is yes, and if you can afford it, then you should take advantage of the opportunity.

- **Huge discounts** – From time to time, media publishers have free ad placements that did not sell or that became available when one of their clients canceled an ad space in a magazine at the last minute (for example). Perhaps the publisher wants to break even on that placement and will offer it for pennies; wouldn't you like to have the flexibility to take advantage of that offer?

Experimenting and Innovating

Your team, the agency and the internal professionals, should have a budget for conducting harmless communication experiments.

- What if we launch 5000 balloons shaped like Jam Jars on the 4th of July instead of investing in fireworks?
- What if we dress up all the donkeys and elephants in the Chicago Zoo with Mexican hats, and we offer free tortillas to all visitors on the first Monday of June?
- What if we pay an actor to dress up in an Iron Man costume and to pay a visit to a children's hospital next Saturday?

Fortunately, innovation in communication is not about inventing things, but discovering new contexts in which old techniques and actions work better.

Only with innovation and constant experimenting will you find unique ways of reaching your Public and surprising

them in a positive way. You need to be open minded, to accept challenges and, at the same time, to take care of costs and potential negative impact. Don't experiment just for the sake of experimenting. Do it in a smart and professional manner.

Monthly activities that never stop

When does this stop? When can we take a break from branding activities and communication campaigns?

If there is a moment in which you could stop, then that moment will be when your company doesn't need the Public anymore... for anything. You don't need sales, reputation, or support from them. If that is the case, then you may stop investing. Until then, constant branding and communication are part of your business as much as manufacturing and delivering the Products, or any activity that helps your company.

So, your activities related to Branding and Communication will be split between

- Communication Campaign related activities and
- Brand building support activities

Sometimes these two may intertwine. Sometimes they support one another as a complementary set of activities.

They all are handled by the same team (internal and agency) under the same brand umbrella strategy.

The Communication Campaign activities

We already discussed them in the 4th “Brands Come True” Module, but, as a reminder, they are

- Testing
 - Monitoring
 - Adjusting
 - Trend watching
 - Reporting and Analyzing Results
 - Managing and controlling
 - Evolving
- including opportunities

All these are related to TOOLS and communication UNIVERSES that are “assembled” in the Communication Campaign.

The Brand Building support activities

Besides all the activities that are linked to the Communication campaign, you need to bear in mind the monthly plan of activities, the one that you will use and perform each month in order to build and support the constant evolution of your Brand.

I could just say that these activities are “everything else” that needs to be done, but that wouldn’t be clear enough for anyone.

MARKETING

If we were to give a very simple definition of all marketing activities, it would be

“Actions that prepare the Products and Services for the intended Market – Marketing”

Depending on the company and its inherent need, these actions may be

- **Market research** – used to identify Universes and Places where the Products will perform sales talk and interact with the needed Customer Segments
- **Marketing planning** – This is part of the Plan of Activities, developed to run the Communication Campaign, but also includes any other activity developed to support the Sales Department or complement the PR department (sales trainings, new product launchings, Easter and Christmas special sales actions, printing materials calendar, promotional instruments production, etc.).
- **New product development and marketing** – The TOOLS needed for each new Product, anatomy of the Product in terms of price, characteristics to be communicated, benefits, packaging, value propositions, embedding market needs even in the stage of prototyping, etc.
- **New market research** for the Product to be sold
- **Competitor watch** – You can never be too careful about what they are bringing to the table.

ADVERTISING

- Assistance in choosing the right UNIVERSES, in deciding the TOOLS, advertising and promotion channels. This needs to be correlated with the expertise of the Agency.
- Checking the budget spending quota
- Tool performance analysis within each Universe

SALES SUPPORT

- Sales Materials – printed materials, Point of Sales Materials for showrooms, exhibitions or in-store activities, sales presentations
- Promotional material for Prospects

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Media relationship and communication
- Crisis management

CONTENT GENERATION

- Blog posts
- Social Media copywriting
- Advertorials
- Interviews
- E-books
- White papers
- Infographics
- Instructional videos and articles

COMMUNITY BUILDING and INTERACTION

- Relationship builder
- Social Media interaction
- Newsletters to subscribers (using content elements)

EVENTS (inside or outside the company)

- Exhibitions
- Seminars or webinars
- Sales Conferences
- Customer hospitality events

Tasks include planning the logistics of the event, booking exhibition booths or meeting facilities, for example, and providing event material, such as displays, presentations or handouts.

At the same time, as part of this set of activities, you will also need to promote external events to customers and prospects to ensure successful attendance, meaning both number and enthusiasm.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Any organization above a certain size and geographic scope will understand the benefits of effective communication within the company. At some time, face-to-face or print communication will get too costly, slow and inefficient.

If you are already using new media communication when interacting with your Clients, your Employees will expect the same. When using modern communication tools (employee

social media, employee mobile app, newsletters), use the same consideration with respect to tone of voice, motivation and positive experience.

- Open lines of communication **between management and employees**.
- Forge a **sense of community** inside the company (team building activities).
- Besides assuring the **flow of information** and decisions between upper and lower level of employees, the internal communication activities should also include actions **meant to transform everybody into a better communicator** inside the Company.
- **Highlight** the best employee contributions and the employee performance as a whole.
- Reinforce **key messages** about strategy and company values. Help employees understand the organization's vision, mission and culture.
- Celebrate **Employee anniversaries** inside the company.

HR ADVERTISING

For talent recruitment, you will often need the development of special creative messages. Branding and, implicitly, brand recognition are powerful motivators for attracting and headhunting quality employees. Instead of plain, cold and technical announcements like "we're hiring," perhaps the same branding principles and ingredients used in the

Communication Campaign to sell your Product could also be used to “sell” the available positions within your company.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Answer client requests before, during and after a purchase. All the activities in this category are meant to enhance the Customer's experience with the Product so that this customer care experience will instill warmth, personal involvement and interest. Here are some customer service principles:

- **Listen** – It is very important to find out how you can help by acknowledging what the Customer wants and needs.
- **Anticipate** – If you are in the position of having all the information, try to think ahead and help the Client by using previous experiences.
- **Appreciate** the Client and the fact that he took the time to contact you even if it was to tell you that he has problems with your Product. Make him feel important. He really is.
- **Help** – By all means, you need to help the Client immediately. Solve his Problem. Don't postpone it. Make it your topmost priority.

- **Solve** – As previously mentioned, the main priority is solving the Client's problem. After doing that, you must also solve the respective issue, so that future Customers will not be confronted with the same problem. Go to the root of the problem and figure things out.

CLIENT CARE AND LOYALTY PROGRAMS

If client service is the department answering the Customer's need for information or helping them out with the Product experience by making it as pleasant as possible, then client care is all about thanking and about meeting and managing the expectations of those clients who are in "silent mode". It may imply

- **Following up** a purchase to check if the Client is satisfied, seeing how things went for him as far as using the Product is concerned, and extracting information in a non-aggressive manner.
- **Client anniversary** of the relationship with you. Try to find technical solutions that can keep a detailed account of the purchases registered, in terms of volume. When these purchases reach a certain previously determined level or quota, or occur within a celebration like period, send a personalized **gift** to mark the client's 1 year anniversary of being a customer, as part of your strategy to thank clients for being with you.

- **Special Client Events** – Maybe you can have a concert or an event with famous speakers where you can gather your clients to, again, say “Thank you!” Within these events, you can award those Clients who were the most active as Ambassadors for your Product.
- **First testers** - Who would better qualify as first Clients for your new Products then your most Loyal clients?

Note:

Which are the most important INGREDIENTS in Client Service and Client Care?

- Your **company culture** and
- **Your employees**, especially if the employees are dedicated, well trained and have the freedom to react empathically when they come across a situation that will make all the difference. Make it more than an inside rule or a brand guideline, make it real. Your employees should be sincere, open and ready to help any customer with more than technical information. They should go beyond the job description and provide your customers with a unique experience.

Lesson Conclusion

Each company, depending on its size, will have managers for each set of activity or professional people to manage more than a set area of determined activities.

You'll have Marketing Managers handling Marketing, Advertising and Sales Support activities. You may have a PR manager that will handle PR, community interaction and building, content publishing and, perhaps if he or she can, this person will also take care of Events, Internal Communication and Customer service, as well as Care. In this context, the Agency team will help you considerably. Your managers will have small executive tasks, and they will run all the required, hands-on type of activities with your partners.

It all depends on how much work that person can handle and how much the work volume grows. The bigger the company, the larger the number of people needed in the internal team.

What you need to take care of, no matter how small or big your team, is the general branding direction that everybody needs to comply with.

Remember that branding needs to be in everything in order for the Brand to grow stronger.

Branding is an attitude, a way of doing things. It's the spirit or the genius that every action needs to follow, whether it's called "Marketing", "Advertising" or "PR".

Brand management, the overall Umbrella

We are almost at the end of the five essential “Brands Come True” Modules, and, as you’ve already noticed, I used as little technical terminology as I could.

Why did I do that?

I tried, as much as possible, to avoid stiff professional branding language because these modules are addressed to motivated business owners and small entrepreneurs who are **experts in making their Products and services**, not in marketing and branding.

Many of you, who have already read one or two branding articles, may have come across a lot of the “brand word” terminology. People in our business today try to impress the audience by using terminology, even in contexts in which understanding would be much easier if the message were conveyed in a straight, simple way.

Don’t get us wrong, there is such a thing as important terminology, which you need to bear in mind as part of a branding process and strategy. Still, I urge you not to feel uncomfortable when professionals talking to you use “bird’s

language.” If you don’t understand their terms, ask them to use yours.

The “Brands Come True” Modules have succeeded in accomplishing an easy translation.

You now know what a business owner’s Vision is. Many will refer to it as **Brand Vision**. They are pointing out the same thing what you already know from the 2nd “Brands Come True” Module, when we talked about the essential INGREDIENTS, the virtual destination that you want to reach to attain victory, by trying to become the best in your field.

You will hear us discussing, on this same page, **Brand Mission** and **Brand Values** (which don’t refer to Product Values). Don’t worry; you’re not missing some important INGREDIENTS. These two will be given to you naturally and will end up coming in handy when you need them.

Brand Mission refers to the steps towards that destination, and **Brand Values** are those “ninja code” moral definitions that you pursue on your Quest for that destination.

See? There is nothing to worry about. Branding is still simple, and it needs to stay like this in your mind. Professionals need these terms in order to communicate between themselves, but you, as a business owner, need to know only the essentials.

We also talked about **Brand Personality** and **Brand Tonality**, or Tone of Voice, when we detailed the TOOLS that need to be created based on your INGREDIENTS. Since your brand

is a live entity, it will most definitely have a unique Personality (perhaps borrowing elements from you, its Father or Mother). It will be funny or serious when addressing your Customers, and, so, it will have a specific Tone of Voice. If you put the word “brand” before each one of these terms, then you know what Brand Personality and Brand Tone of Voice stand for.

All these (Brand + Vision, Mission, Values, Personality, Tone of Voice) sum up all the needed ingredients when referring to **Brand Platform**.

Do you want more definitions?

A simple approach would be to see things through your Customer eyes. as far as the relation with your Brand is concerned.

- Does he recognize it?

Then you achieved **Brand awareness**.

- Does the Client know it?

Then he has **Brand knowledge** because he has already tried it.

- Does he trust it?

Well, then he has a positive **Brand image** associated with your Product.

- Does the client like it?

He has established a **Brand attitude** towards you by perceiving and understanding your **Brand Value**.

- Does he think your brand is better than others?

He has finally developed **Brand preference**.

- Does he buy it repeatedly?

Congratulations, you got him in the **Brand loyalty** zone.

- Does the Client recommend it?

Bravo, you've got a **Brand ambassador** in your Client.

More branding terms:

- **Brand architecture** – how the sub-brands brands of a company are organized. Example: Coca-Cola has Diet Coke, Vanilla Coke, etc. Even if the Products address different needs, desires and targets, they find themselves under the same branding umbrella: Coke's branding strategy manages them all.
- **Brand equity** – the extent to which the brand is known and fairly well regarded and how this materializes into financial and commercial assets. A

plain coffee is 1 dollar. The same coffee, bought from Starbucks, turns this dollar into 5 dollars. People know this, and they accept it. Why? Is it because of the brand? The feeling and the value transfer they have instilled upon themselves and their Loyal customers? An accountant doesn't care; he will see that branding simply adds more financial value to the Product.

- **Brand audit** – an examination of your brand's tangible and intangible assets in order to assess the health of the brand.
- **Brand differentiation** – those qualities that make your company, brand, Product or service unique and more desirable than that of your competitors.
- **Brand essence** – how your brand connects emotionally with your customers (by finding the exact touch points); a brand's core.
- **Brand identity** – the way you want your brand to be perceived by your audience (in terms of visual perception, tonality, emotions generated,

positioning). This is not the same as visual identity or corporate identity. The logo is part of this sum of perceptions (remember the “Brands Come True” brand definition), but this segment of branding alone doesn’t amount to that much.

- **Brand roadmap** – the blueprint of all future branding activities you are going to develop, presently and in the near future of your Product’s life.
- **Brand mapping** – a research technique used to identify the core position of your brand compared to the competing brands on the market (on various dimensions: brand preference, performance, loyalty, engagement, awareness, impressions, opportunities and threats).
- **Brand / branding strategy** – developing a long-term plan for your brand (company) in order to achieve specific goals (financially, business-wise, awareness, etc.) that provide a sustainable, long-lasting and healthy growth.

- **Brand champions** – an executive (someone in a leadership position) who takes care of your brand equity and embodies your brand's promise and policy, internally and externally.
- **Brand culture** – the reflection of internal brand experiences and values; the organizational culture of your company, the way work gets done, by whom and how, on a day-to-day basis.
- **Brand guidelines** – how to use your TOOLS in order to convey a unitary visual identity, your brand's strategy and tone, so as to be in accordance with your brand's vision.
- **Brand management** – a process of identifying and understanding everything related to your brand (market place, customers' needs, behaviors, preferences, incomes, etc.) and maintaining its promise, by building trust via solid, constant growth strategies. It's keeping the branding umbrella always open so that all activities are under its protective influence.

- **Brand relevance** – making your competitors irrelevant within your market share, by offering your customers an innovative Product or service that covers their needs in the best qualitative manner.
- **Brand parity** – the differences or similarities between brands that are in the same Product category.

Because branding is a liberal activity and because it is still a brand new science, you will not find the same definition for a single Brand Term of the ones above listed. This is the fact.

If you are to look on the Internet, you can still find outdated definitions that refer to BRAND as being the LOGO and to BRANDING as being the activity of putting that logo everywhere you can. That is funny and yes, these examples exist. You will see them, and perhaps you'll wonder "Am I wrong? Did "Brands Come True" teach me the wrong things?" No.

The important thing when learning about branding isn't to agree with others about a definition, but to realize that this is the way you should think about all your business actions and projections, for the pragmatic reasons of getting more successful, becoming more powerful in terms of influencing your industry, and making more money.

All these because you want to help people receive a better Product or service so that they'll live a better life.

If people have life principles that they use as guidance, then entrepreneurs should have branding principles so as to safely run their business.

You cannot follow your branding principles only Tuesdays from 10 AM to 6 PM. This is why **branding is a permanent** job, for an indefinite period of time, a way of doing business and communication within and outside of your Company.

We've reached the end of the 5th "Brands Come True" Module and the last one from the Essential series of modules created to clear up for you what branding is all about (1st **"Brands Come True" Module**). Along with this, we have also built an understanding of business strategies and talked about a company's basic model, its prototype, so that you don't start branding for a concept that is not prepared from the operational point of view.

We also detailed and defined the INGREDIENTS that you need in order to start COMMUNICATING with your audience so that your PRODUCT (or Service) gets sold to a high quality Customer segment (2nd **"Brands Come True" Module**).

We used these INGREDIENTS to build the proper TOOLS for your Product's communication within media UNIVERSES (3rd **"Brands Come True" Module**).

We took all possible measures to have control over the results of the Communication Campaign that takes place under the guidance and coordination of a well-established

Branding Strategy. So, we launched this Campaign (4th “Brands Come True” Module).

In the 5th “Brands Come True” Module, we underlined the importance of being prepared for both the positive and the negative outcomes of a business journey.

We defined all activities that need to be done on a monthly basis, apart from handling Communication Campaigns, so as to have constant evolution of the brand. Finally, we concluded with the importance of the Branding Umbrella that needs to determine our actions constantly.

You have succeeded in creating for yourself a clear picture of the branding way of doing business. We did not intend to create a branding expert out of you and, hopefully, you’ve realized by now that this perspective would be less than productive for your Company.

As stated during the “Brands Come True” Modules, the best you can do to help your company is to manage it both as a complex and singular entity, to concentrate your own efforts on making a better Product and service, each one better than what you developed the day before.

I hope you've enjoyed this Course!

Good luck!

Don't forget to tell me all about your success story (I would love to hear also about failures and help, if I can). Tell me how "Brands Come True" helped your business out and what new things you've found on your own.

About the author

Creative in his thoughtwork. Brilliant in his ideas and creating concepts that tell stories for others. Astute in asking the right questions at just the right time to do a deeper dive and come up with amazing solutions. A wide bandwidth of branding strategies and marketing applications. All of these are descriptors for Dragos. In my thirty-five year career as a college professor (psychology) and as a corporate consultant, I've met many hundreds (perhaps thousands) of creatives and concept designers. Dragos Alexa is among the top 1% of professional people I have been blessed to meet.

I have known Dragos for over six years, and he has provided me with a variety of out-of-the-box branding solutions, technical design, and specific strategy on creating unique game-changing ideas. More than that, he brings an awareness of what it takes to make dreams and ideas of others become a streetlevel reality.

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- This is his 3rd book on Marketing and Branding for students and early entrepreneurs
- Adores good sushi
- He hates to admit that he still likes Boyzone type of music
- He's going to beat you with an ashtray at table tennis

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