Gartner®

BRANDING AND VALUE PROPOSITION PRIMER FOR 2018

(Analyst: Kirsten Newbold-Knipp)

SUMMARY

Brands that outperform peers share a common set of characteristics including a focused growth strategy, strong value proposition and differentiated positioning. Our research provides marketing leaders insight, best practices and advice on what it takes to build and nurture a world-class brand.

Scope

Gartner defines a brand as the combination of elements, including name, logo, positioning, stories and experiences, that differentiate a company and its offerings in increasingly competitive markets.

The agenda for branding and value proposition development focuses on:

- Developing brand positioning that emphasizes points of differentiation and connects with customers through resonant, powerful shared values.

- Managing brand architecture and rebranding efforts for delivery of a distinctive brand promise and alignment to a compelling CX.

- Crafting breakthrough brand messaging and storytelling to create engaging narratives.

- Boosting executive confidence around the merit and ROI of brand-building investments.
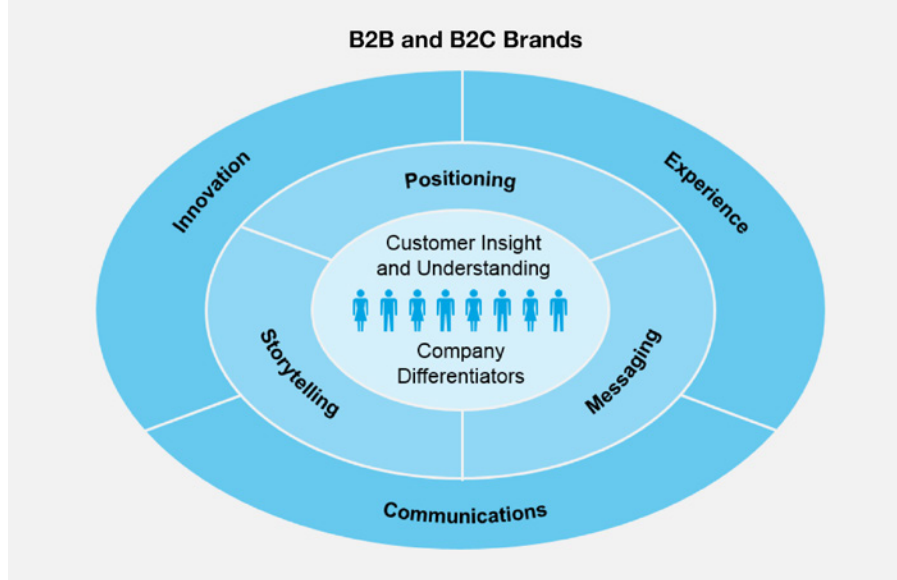
Brand differentiates a company and its offerings in increasingly competitive markets.

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ANALYSIS

Figure 1. Branding and Value Proposition Overview

B2B and B2C Brands

Innovation · Positioning · Experience · Storytelling · Messaging · Communications

Customer Insight and Understanding

Company Differentiators

Source: Gartner (January 2018)

Marketing leaders seeking to build a world-class brand must begin with a compelling strategy and architecture. They must ensure that the brand speaks with a clear, coherent and consistent voice, and that promises made are promises kept. Your brand is not about your logos and mission statement. It's the sum of all of the experiences you deliver both before and after the sale; the differentiation and relevance of your value proposition; and, crucially, the agreement between the two. The value you promise must correspond with the value you deliver to your customer.

Nike. Amazon. Coca-Cola. Google. These are examples of iconic, world-class brands. What do they have in common? They are the product of deliberate and coordinated efforts, starting with a relevant, resonant and differentiated promise, and cohesive strategy and investment. These efforts ensure the brand promise shows up in the lives of their customers at the right times and in the right ways.

The value you promise must correspond with the value you deliver to your customer.

Top Challenges and How Gartner Can Help

Gartner's 2018 research agenda on branding and value propositions will help marketing leaders forge a path to brand leadership with best-practice research, insight and advice based on the community knowledge of some of the best brand marketers in the world. Through a combination of primary research, case study examples, toolkits, templates and how-to advice, Gartner will help you solve the most pressing branding, positioning and messaging challenges.

How do I define and deliver against a brand strategy and architecture?

Branding is often mistaken as a soft discipline, more art than science. But the best brand marketers are hardly gut-feel operators. They rely on both quantitative and qualitative data-driven insights to integrate signals from the marketplace with drivers of the business. They have a clear strategy for their brand portfolio, which begins with its purpose, its differentiated value and a well-designed framework to support distinct customer needs, messages and storylines.

They also have a well-designed brand architecture. Are you a branded house or a house of brands? Your branding efforts should be accretive to overall company value, ensuring that a family of brands doesn't compete for internal resources and/or customer attention. Finally, brand management must be a closed-loop discipline, ensuring that you've defined the right key performance indicators and metrics, and have access to the right data and analytics to measure, optimize and continue to invest in maintaining brand health over time.

Planned Research

- **How to identify the right brand architecture for your business:** As companies bring increasingly complex offers and portfolios to market, marketing leaders struggle to build successful brand architectures. This research will showcase different types of brand architectures and their associated benefits.

- **Make the business case for brand-building investments:** Many marketers still struggle to justify investment in development and management of corporate brands. This research will help marketers understand when brand investments are required and how to convince executives to buy into a specific strategy or project.

How do I create memorable and differentiated value propositions, messages and stories?

Breakthrough brand messaging must extend well beyond functional benefits. Leading brand marketers boost their offers' relevance by enabling customers to see themselves in brand stories. Messages speak to the range of benefits, intrinsic and extrinsic, that will accrue to the prospective buyer. Offers focus not on what products you have to sell but on the role your products and services will play in your customers' lives.

For B2B companies, marketers must combine functional, business and personal needs to encourage key individuals to advocate on behalf of a specific supplier and its value proposition. For B2C companies, a values-based brand position that considers brand differentiators, emotional appeal, cultural trends and influencer allure can boost commercial results and motivate consumers to amplify key messaging.

Planned Research

- **How to find your brand story:** Marketing leaders know that capturing their customers' imagination depends on compelling and distinctive stories, differentiated positioning, and clear and coherent messaging. This research will show you how to find your brand's voice, value and storylines.

- **How to position your brand effectively today:** Gartner research finds that marketing leaders who use values-based positioning are nearly twice as likely to be as high performing as their peers.[1] This research features the four elements of shared value and includes best-practice case examples.

> **Focus on the role your products and services will play in your customers' lives.**

How do I turn a brand vision and strategy into action?

Leading organizations are good stewards of their brands. They minimize the risks of deviation from their intended positioning by engaging employees in brand development and deployment while also setting out clear guidelines and governance structures to maintain consistency and compliance over time. They use data to define and optimize an advertising strategy to drive brand awareness and actively monitor ongoing performance by measuring brand equity, sentiment and lift.

At the same time, they keep a close eye on the customer experience to ensure agreement between the brand promise and how that promise shows up in the lives of customers. Brands today must also consider how customers' digital preferences, behaviors and conversations can shape a brand. They must thoughtfully design messages and stories that will scale through earned and shared media, and anticipate where customers may take brand stories in a new direction.

Planned Research

- **How to monitor brand alignment and pinpoint opportunities for improvement:** Digitally driven experiences create an infinite number of possible brand interactions for today's customers. Learn how to use a brand-focused framework to hone improvement efforts and identify the most critical priorities.

- **How to tap into natural conversation scale:** As marketers struggle with the economics of promoting brand messaging through paid media, earned and shared media can present interesting alternatives. Learn how to design brand messaging that quickly scales by tapping into customers' existing interests and priorities.

Related Priorities

Priority	Focus
Customer Experience Strategy and Design	Customer experience (CX) management is the practice of using customer insight to design and execute a cross-functional CX strategy that increases satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy.
Customer Understanding and Insight	Integrating customer data — across silos and data streams — and leveraging the latest methodologies and tools are key to supporting business growth and retention.
Leading and Managing Marketing	Leading and managing marketing involves setting strategy, structuring teams, sourcing and developing talent, and aligning people, processes, partners, data and technology to achieve corporate goals.

Source: Gartner

GARTNER RECOMMENDED READING

Suggested First Steps

"How to Find Your Story: Understanding Positioning, Messaging and Brand Storytelling"

"Narrative Design: How to Connect Brand Story and Content With Customer Experience"

"How Do I Position My Brand Effectively Today?"

Essential Reading

"Use Brand Strategy to Guide Advertising Planning"

"Navigating the Intelligent Brand Framework"

"Business Case for B2B Branding"

"Building Value Propositions Customers Actually Value"

"CEB Ignition™ Guide to Managing a B2B Brand Refresh"

"CEB Ignition™ Guide to Managing a B2C Brand Refresh"

Evidence

For this research, we gathered information on trends through analysis of Gartner's client interactions, primary research conducted by the authors, and conversations with Gartner clients and other individuals.

[1] "How Do I Position My Brand Effectively Today?"

ABOUT GARTNER FOR MARKETERS

Digital has redefined the role of marketing, adding new players and creating bigger complexities

Gartner for Marketers helps you get up to speed on and stay smarter in the eight marketing areas that matter most: social, mobile, multichannel and data-driven marketing, digital commerce, customer experience, marketing management, and emerging marketing technology and trends. Our clients say that they use our real-time, expert advice and objective research, data and tools to:

• Target the right audiences

• Choose the right channels

• Quickly shortlist marketing and technology providers

• Stay informed on market and competitors

• Save time and avoid costly mistakes

Gartner helps companies improve their business results through the use of technology. Our independent research and advice is trusted by business and technology leaders in more than 10,000 distinct enterprises around the world.

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