

**BRAVE  
NEW**

# THE SECRET TO AN ACCELERATED BRANDING PROCESS

**WHY YOU SHOULD INVEST IN YOUR  
BRAND, AND WHY YOU SHOULDN'T  
TAKE YEARS TO DO IT**



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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY YOUR BRAND MATTERS

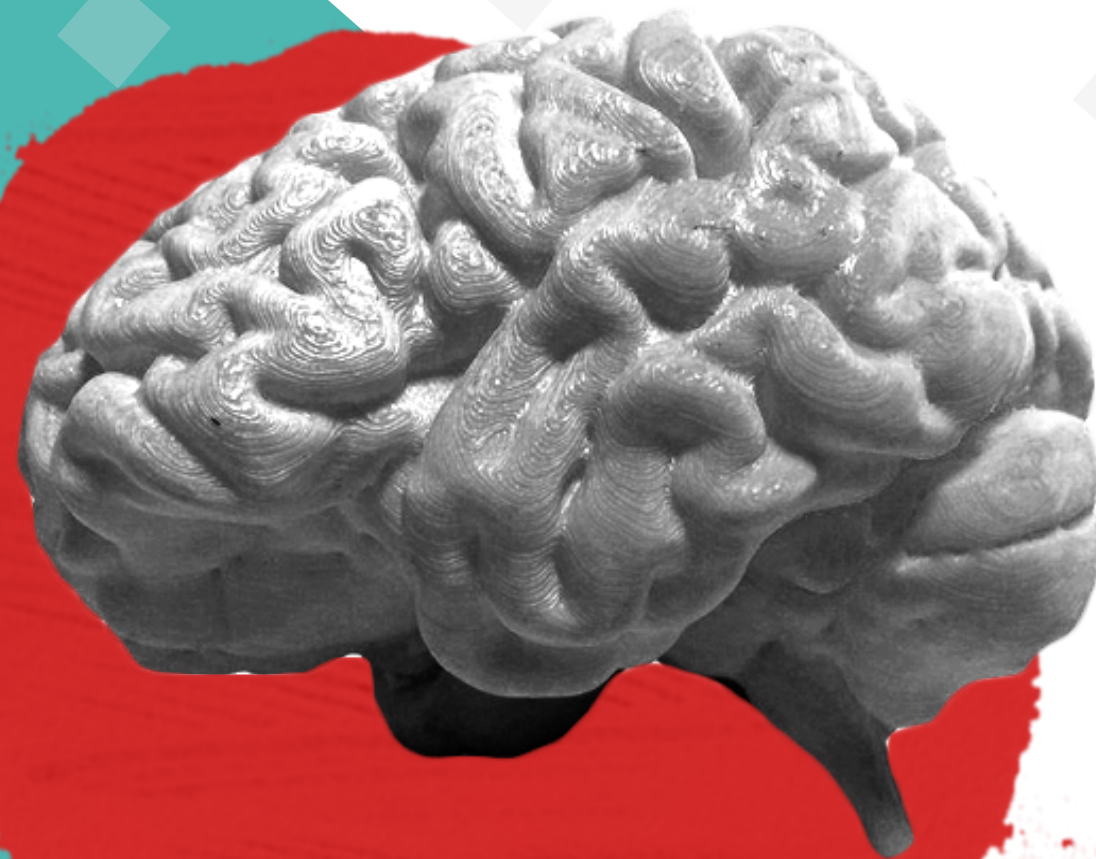
“Brand” is a word that’s thrown around a lot. Some think it’s a set of logos and colors. Others think it’s the messages you share in marketing campaigns. While these are components of a brand, we believe your brand is much more. It’s the transformative idea that sets you apart from your competitors, and it’s the best way to safeguard the future of your company.

In the following pages, we’ll unpack why a unique brand matters, how to know if your brand needs work, and the essential things you need to think about to conduct an effective branding process. Enjoy!



# LEAVING A LASTING MEMORY

A company is only as important as the memory it creates in its customer's minds. That memory is the essence of your brand. Branding is the discipline of curating that memory.



## UNIQUE MEMORIES CREATE LOYALTY

Think about the great brands like Disney or Harley Davidson. Disney makes us feel like magic is possible. Harley Davidson makes us feel free, even if we only ride a motorcycle 80 miles a year. We remember how these brands make us feel long after we've interacted with them. They'll be with us when we're ready to make our next purchase. This is the benefit of curating a lasting memory.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE IF YOU DO NOTHING

Every brand leaves a memory, whether intentional or not. If your company leaves that memory to chance, you may be known for customer service, you'll likely even win some deals, but you won't build a long-term competitive advantage. You'll be just another option to choose from.



# HOW A UNIQUE BRAND SAFEGUARDS A COMPANY'S FUTURE

## **FREEDOM FROM PRICE COMPETITION**

Great brands no longer have to compete on price. They can charge a premium. Clorox bleach is the best example. They charge twice as much as generics despite being the exact same product.

## **ALIGNMENT**

By aligning your entire team around what makes you unique, you'll be able to think through how to bring that uniqueness to life in your day-to-day work.

## **CLEAR DIRECTION IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING MARKETPLACE**

We live in an age of disruption. Technology is changing every day. Service lines that are here today may disappear tomorrow. A unique brand sets an organizational direction not based on chasing the latest sale or innovation.

## **CATEGORY REDEFINITION**

The best branding redefines the ground rules for your category. Think about how Starbucks redefined the coffee experience or Airbnb redefined travel by allowing you to escape the hotel.



# EXTERNAL INPUT IS ESSENTIAL

## YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO YOUR BUSINESS TO THINK CLEARLY ABOUT YOUR BRAND.

You need outside input. Ideally, you'll hire an outside firm to help with your brand development. You should also have extensive conversations with those who love you most, your most loyal. You need to know why they love you. If you're taking the project on internally, at least do the interviews. Outside input will expand your perspective and bring new ideas to light.

Now, you might be feeling that it's a bit disingenuous for a branding agency to suggest you hire an outside firm. We get it. But we believe this to our core. **In fact, each time we've made a major investment in our brand, we've brought in outside help.**



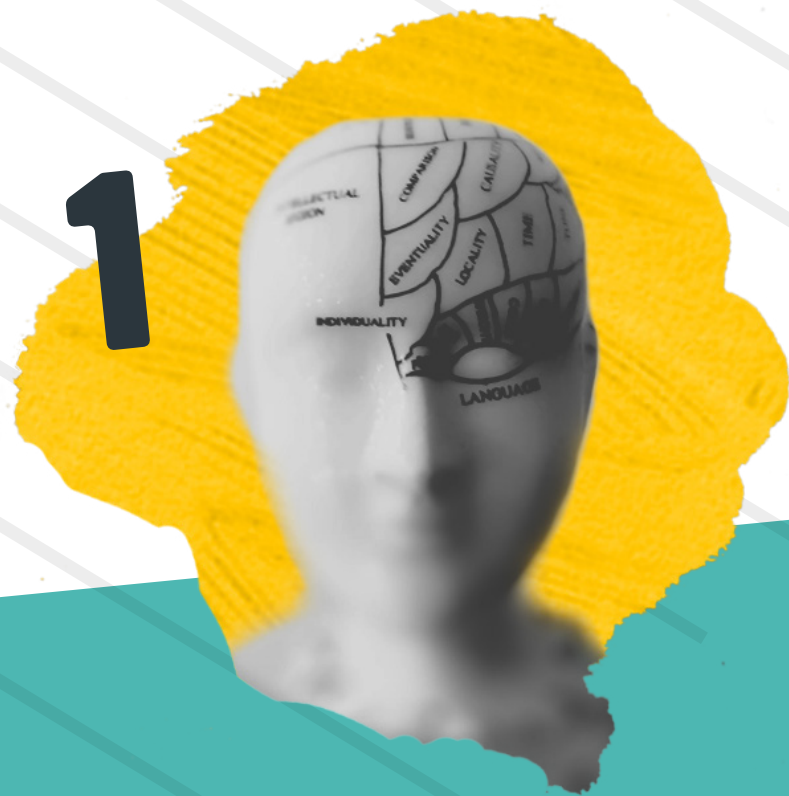
# HOW TO KNOW IF (AND WHEN) YOU NEED BRAND HELP

**A BRANDING PROJECT IS A BIG UNDERTAKING.  
ASK THESE QUESTIONS TO FIGURE OUT IF YOU  
NEED TO TAKE ONE ON.**





# CAN YOU ANSWER THESE THREE QUESTIONS ?



## WHAT IS THE MEMORY THAT YOUR COMPANY LEAVES IN THE MINDS OF ITS CUSTOMERS?

Unless you can answer this question immediately and succinctly, you could probably spend some time developing your brand. And remember, your answer can't be that you're the smartest (everyone's smart) or that you provide the best customer service. Those things aren't memorable.



## IF YOU ASKED YOUR TEAM WHAT YOUR COMPANY DOES, HOW MANY ANSWERS WOULD YOU GET?

It doesn't matter if you have a good answer to question 1 if the rest of your team has different answers to this question. One of the main goals of a brand is to create a consistent memory, and everyone in the company must be on the same page for that to come to fruition.



## ARE YOU CONFIDENT YOUR COMPANY COULD SUCCEED EVEN IF YOUR LEADING TALENT LEFT?

It's difficult to recruit and retain top talent. We think you should hang on to them as long as you can. But here's the reality: top talent eventually moves on because they're ambitious. If your success is built on their brilliance rather than a core brand, you are in a bit of trouble. You guessed it—time for a branding process!



# BONUS QUESTION FOR EXECUTIVES & FOUNDERS:

## WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE, AND ARE YOU ON COURSE TO ACHIEVE IT?

Some people start and build companies for the money. That's fine. But we think those people are in the minority.

There's a powerful fire burning inside of most entrepreneurs. You're trying to create something meaningful, leave a legacy. Otherwise, what reward would we get from endless hours of toil? You may as well go work for someone else.

Are you thinking about what's driving you? Good.

**Now think about your team.** How many of them have that same deep drive, that motivation? Maybe you can count a few people. But the hard truth is that the majority of your team are working because they want to do a job. Sure, they want to work hard. And they're incredibly talented. But they are still just doing a job. They don't have a legacy in mind ... let alone yours.

**You must bridge that chasm to achieve your legacy.** All of your business needs to operate in service of that legacy, otherwise it will become a profit-driven machine that will ultimately cave on its principles in order to get that extra percentage or two of margin. A strong brand that's built around the legacy you're trying to leave will protect you from that.



# SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE

**GONE ARE THE DAYS OF THE 18–24  
MONTH BRANDING PROCESS.**





# THE TYPICAL BRANDING PROCESS LASTS ANYWHERE FROM 12–24 MONTHS

## OOF.

There's no reason for a branding process to last that long, though. At A Brave New, we're convinced that it's better if it doesn't. **Every brand project we undertake is between 6–8 months from start to finish.**

Now, some branding experts might call us crazy for breaking with norms, but we're pragmatists (we do follow a structured branding model, don't worry). The world has changed in such a way that the longer process can no longer be justified. Most businesses can't afford to take two years to identify their competitive edge. Also, we think the shorter process just makes sense.

**Let's unpack this.**



# IN 24 MONTHS YOUR COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE WILL HAVE CHANGED

## EVERY BRAND MUST BE BUILT FOR THE LONG-TERM.

A solid brand should stand the test of time for 15–20 years, or longer. Your brand essence, that memory that makes your company unique, should be true as long as you are in business, even though technology will have entirely changed by next year.

So, if this is true, then why does it matter if you take 24 months to develop your brand? Well, there’s a real opportunistic factor to consider as well.

Any effective branding agency will take time to thoroughly analyze your competition and identify opportunities for differentiation. They’ll also look for where you can leapfrog in front of your competition. But, in today’s world, if you take 24 months to act, those potential areas of advantage will be gone. Speed is more important than ever before. The good news is, speed doesn’t mean a bad process.







## GET 80% OF THE VALUE IN LESS THAN HALF THE TIME

A longer branding process might include half a year for research and competitive analysis, then six months to develop initial concepts, and another extended period to finalize the brand identity and develop a visual identity to match.

**BY EMBRACING AN APPROACH THAT EMPHASIZES QUALITATIVE RESEARCH, WORKSHOPS, AND AN ITERATIVE APPROACH**, we're able to check the boxes of research, competitive analysis, concept development, brand identity finalization, and visual identity development in around six months.

We use a workshop-driven process to create a brand identity that is pretty damn good and then put it out in the world for real people to interact with. We fine tune in real time. Which leads us to the next point.



# TESTING IN THE REAL WORLD LEADS TO REAL ITERATION

**THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS OF YOUR BRAND, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU'VE WORKED ON IT, WILL BE DECIDED BY YOUR CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS.**

An accelerated yet thoughtful process starts that feedback loop far sooner and at a much lower price point.

Once your brand is in the real world, people are going to tell you what they love about it, what they hate about it, and what is just “meh.” In the first months following launch, it’s your job to sharpen the strong points of the brand and change the areas that people aren’t inspired by until they drive real interest and excitement.

It’s ok to evolve how you’re sharing the brand to the world based on feedback. Just make sure it builds on the essence that you decided on.







## BRANDING TAKES ENERGY

The final thing that we love about the shorter process is that it means you have some energy left over for implementation, including the iteration mentioned above. Typically it takes 18 months to 3 years of hard work to successfully implement a brand. And unlike the brand development process, this step can't be shortened. It just takes time for people to internalize the essence of a brand.

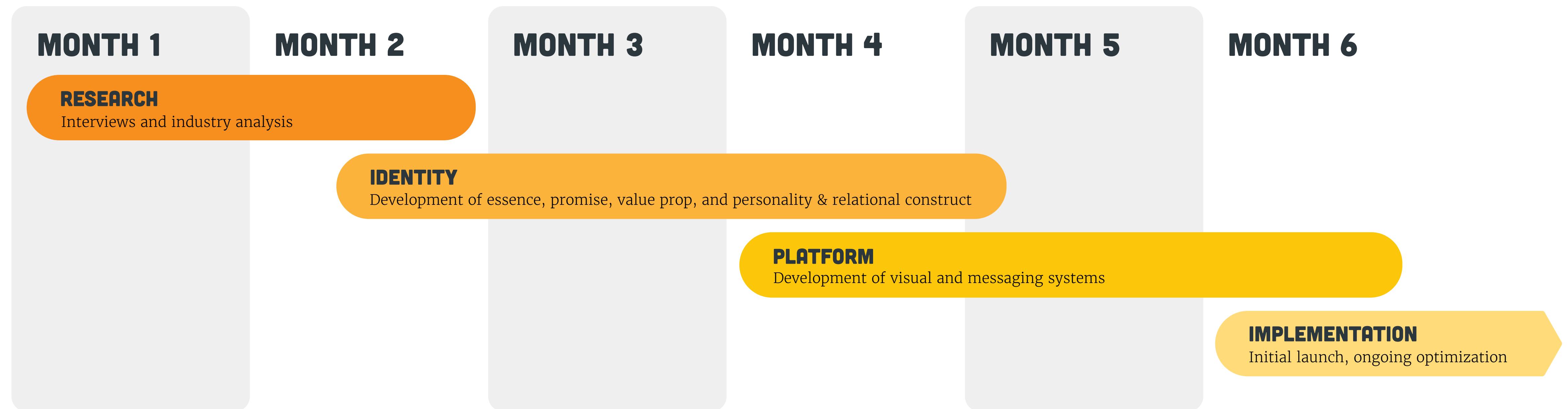
This process takes some discipline. It requires relentless repetition of key messages. It requires avoiding the distraction of a shiny new campaign. It requires always asking whether the content you're releasing or the new service you're launching matches up with the essence. It's hard work.

Our experience has been that getting through the brand development process quickly means that the team responsible for implementing the brand will still have energy to do this hard work.

**AND A MOTIVATED TEAM WILL BE KEY TO YOUR LONG-TERM SUCCESS.**

# WHAT DOES AN ACCELERATED PROCESS LOOK LIKE (A TIMELINE)?

Every company and branding process is a little different, but from a high level, here's what an accelerated timeline usually looks like:



**WE'LL EXPLORE THESE PHASES A BIT DEEPER IN THE NEXT SECTION. READ ON!**

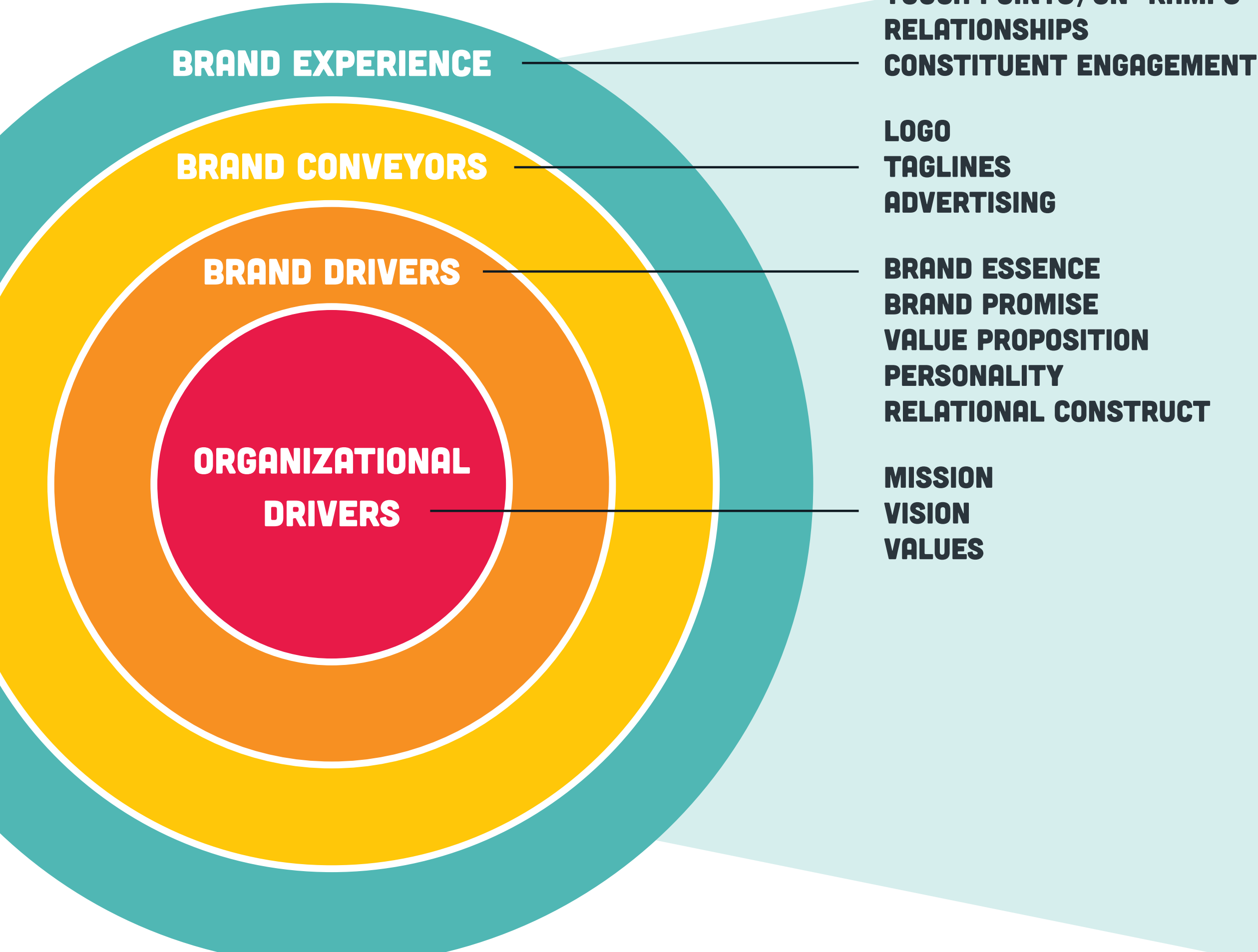




# KEY INGREDIENTS TO AN ACCELERATED BRANDING PROCESS

**IF YOU'RE GOING TO COMPLETE A BRANDING PROCESS  
QUICKLY, YOU ALSO MUST COMPLETE IT EFFECTIVELY.  
HERE'S HOW WE APPROACH IT.**

# EFFECTIVE BRANDING REQUIRES A SOLID FRAMEWORK

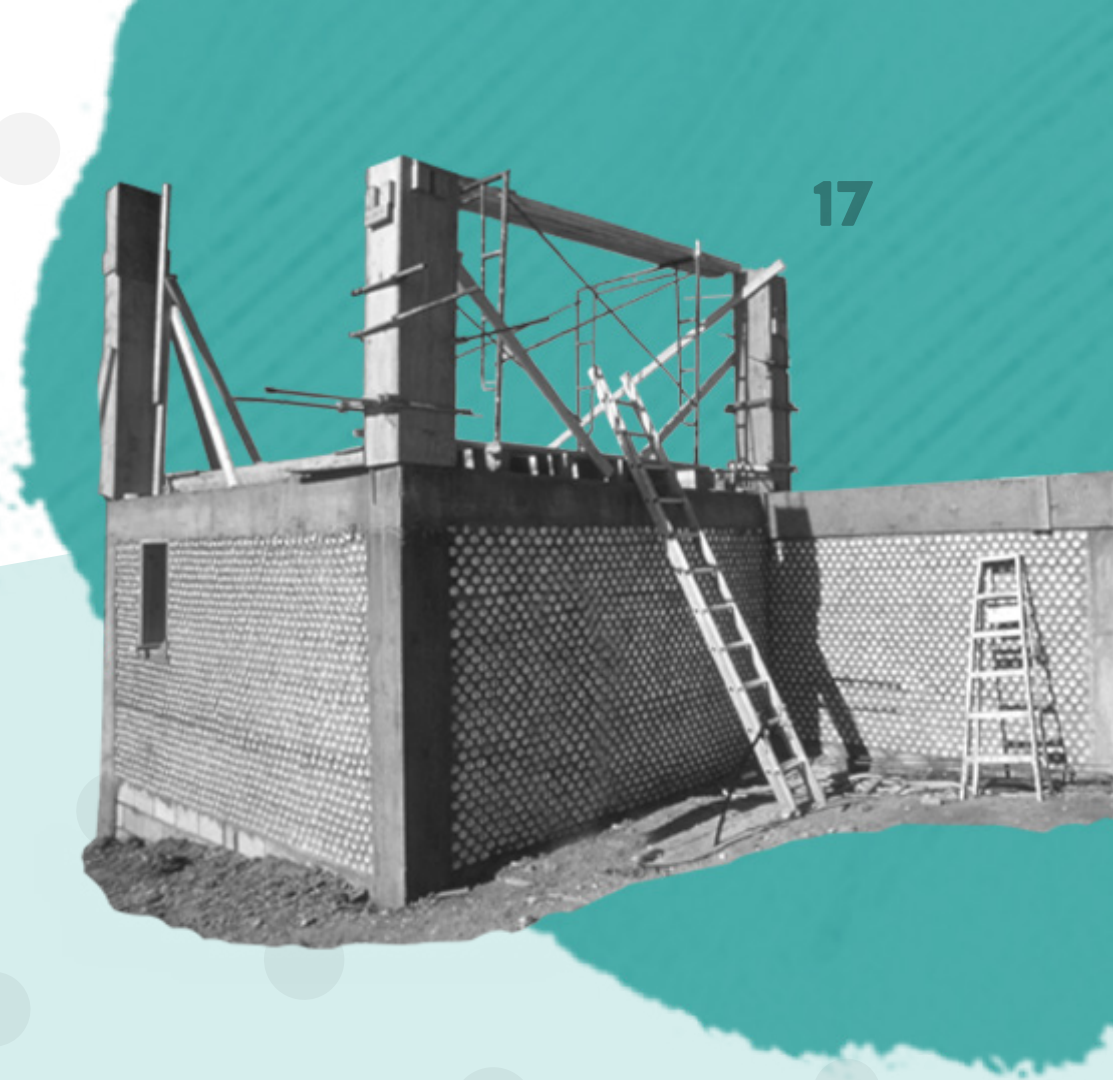


## INTRO TO INTEGRATED BRANDING

At A Brave New, we utilize a version of the integrated branding method. This method was made popular by the 1999 book [\*Integrated Branding\* by F. Joseph LePla and Lyn Parker](#). 1999 may seem ancient, but the principles are still true.

We’re not going to focus here on the organizational drivers, brand conveyors, or brand experience. You’re probably already familiar with all of those. Let’s dive deeper into the brand drivers.

Brand drivers are key. They make your business unique. They make you stand out from the crowd. For example, if you own a sandwich shop, they describe why your sandwich shop is different from every other sandwich shop. They will allow you to charge more for your product.

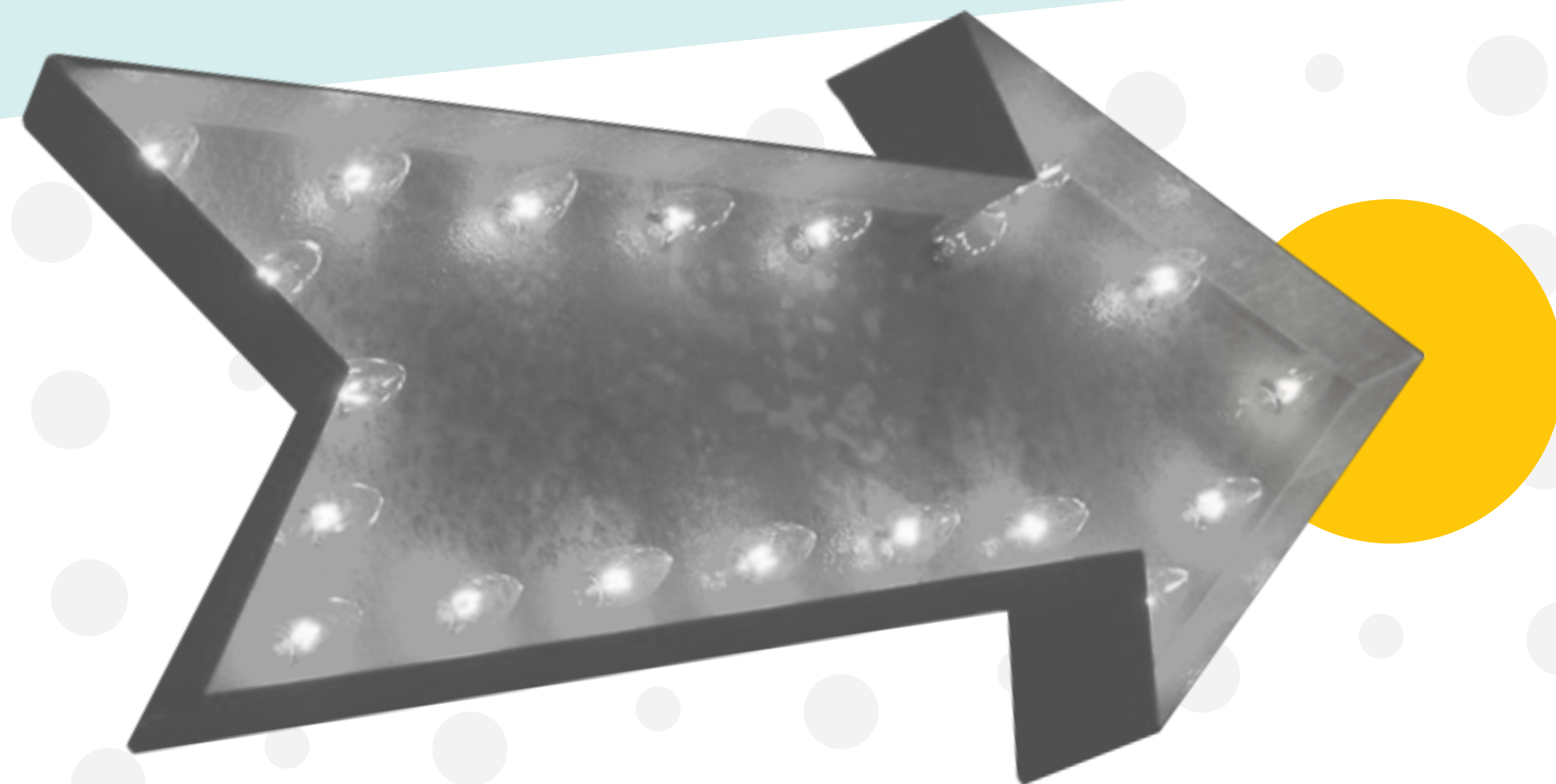




## LET'S WALK THROUGH EACH COMPONENT:

- ▶ **ESSENCE:** Your essence is the connecting thread pulling together everything that you do. This is the main memory that you want to leave people with every time you interact with them. For Disney it's "magic," for Harley Davidson it's "freedom."
- ▶ **PROMISE:** What promise can you make and keep to your customers every time they interact with you?

- ▶ **VALUE PROPOSITION:** Your value proposition is the unique value that you provide to your customers.
- ▶ **PERSONALITY & RELATIONAL CONSTRUCT:** What would your brand be like if it was a person? How does it relate to people?



There are many other frameworks out there with merit. The point is simply that you need to choose one. Don't create the framework as you build the brand. It's a recipe for disaster.

# EFFECTIVE BRANDING REQUIRES (JUST ENOUGH) RESEARCH

## RESEARCH IS ALWAYS THE MOST TEMPTING PART OF A PROJECT TO SKIP.

To many it feels like three steps backwards before moving forward. They're wrong. Gathering input from real people (because your brand exists in their minds) and the competitive landscape (because there are real opportunities to exploit) is the most important part of the branding process. This expands your thinking beyond your existing thought patterns. Check out our [podcast interview with expert researcher Felicity Moore](#) to learn more.

Don't worry though. You can do just enough research and create a great brand. The three elements to the right are the key components we'll never sacrifice on in the process. And, special bonus, if you want to read a great book about research, check out [Just Enough Research by Erika Hall](#).

### ▶ INTERNAL INTERVIEWS

Internal interviews focus on asking key team members their impressions about the brand, strengths and weaknesses, and more. This research step will help you understand how much work you have to do to bring the team into alignment. It will also begin to build buy-in for implementation.

### ▶ IN-DEPTH CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

During the in-depth customer interview phase, we recommend talking to the customers who love you most. After all, our goal with the brand is to attract more people like them. Focus this interview on understanding why they chose to work with you, and why they continue to.

### ▶ COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

You also need to evaluate what opportunities exist among your competition. Take a look at each major player to understand what services they're offering, what their growth strategy appears to be, what their value proposition is, and even a bit of their messaging. Use this information to identify gaps in the market that you can exploit with your new brand.





# EFFECTIVE BRANDING REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST A MARKETING FOCUS

## YOUR BRAND PROCESS MUST FOCUS NOT JUST ON BUILDING ASSETS THAT CAN SHINE IN SALES AND MARKETING EFFORTS.

An effective brand must infiltrate everything that your company does—from how you build your internal culture, to how you design your services, to even your accounting processes. Your team will be the champions of your brand, and they need a solid guide to living it out in every aspect of their work on a day-to-day basis.

Here are a few examples of how that could play out:

### ▶ **SERVICE DESIGN & DELIVERY**

Every new service you create and every service you deliver should be evaluated within the lens of your brand. Customers should be able to grasp what makes you unique in an instant.

### ▶ **MARKETING**

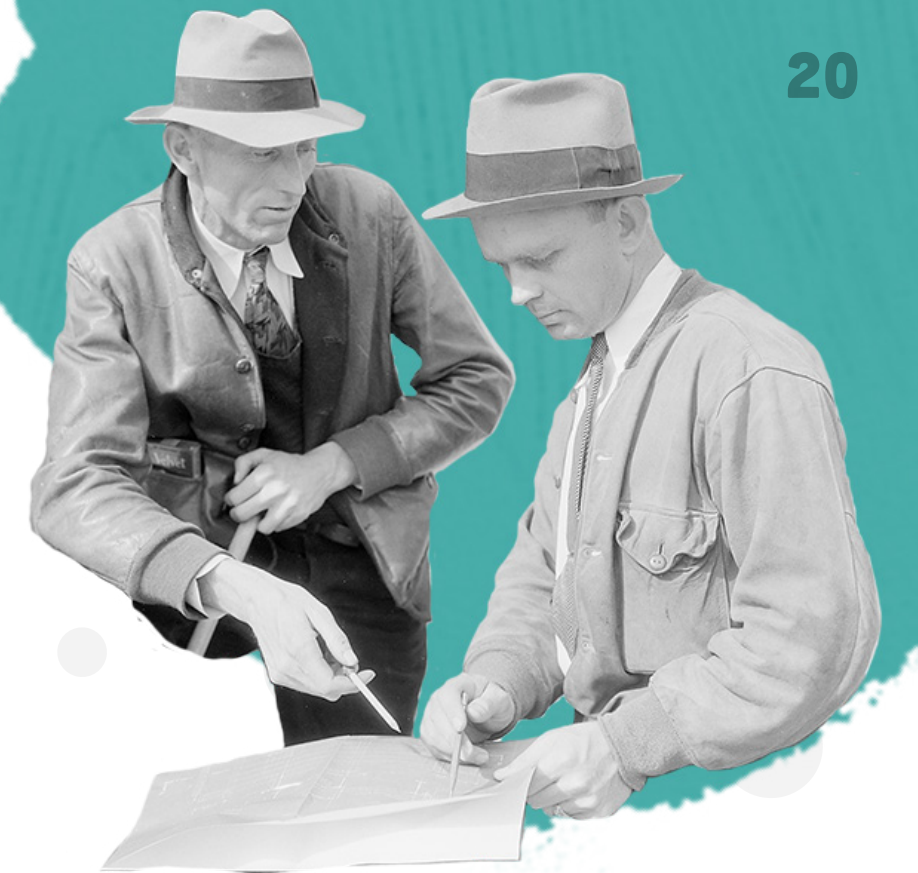
All marketing efforts going forward should be run through a simple set of questions called a brand filter to make sure they convey the essence of your brand and fulfill your brand promise.

### ▶ **SALES**

You should review your sales process to ensure it aligns with the overall brand approach. Consider building some simple tools like talking points, question guides, and more to help keep your team on brand as they develop presentations, run meetings, etc.

### ▶ **CULTURE**

Think through with your leadership and HR teams what distinct elements of your brand you want to pull into your culture and hiring process, then make a plan and implement it.





# EFFECTIVE BRANDING REQUIRES THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF ASPIRATION

## ANY GOOD BRAND NEEDS TO BE ACHIEVABLE BY THE COMPANY THAT'S LIVING IT OUT.

We recommend doing that by mixing a dose of both reality and expansive thinking. Here are the ratios we recommend:



### ▶ 50% WHO YOU ARE

Half of your brand should be made up of the greatest things about your company in the current moment. You'll uncover these in your interviews with customers, maybe you even know some of them already.



### ▶ 50% WHO YOU WANT TO BE

The other half of your brand should push you to be a better version of yourself. This should be where you allow yourself to think big and dream about what you could be. These bits of inspiration will push your company forward in even the most challenging days.



### ▶ 100% COMMITMENT

Whatever brand you develop, you need to demonstrate 100% commitment to it. We're talking about a laser focus on repeating key messages over and over, even when you get bored by them. When that starts happening, you'll know that your customers might be starting to absorb it.



# EFFECTIVE BRANDING REQUIRES IMPLEMENTATION

► **CONTENT STRATEGY AS IMPLEMENTATION**

An organizational content strategy is the best way to ensure that your brand is implemented. This process will help you translate the high concept ideas from the brand into actual marketing messages and communication plans across your business. It will also help you with the change management you'll need to guide your team through the process.

We use Brain Traffic's content strategy quad to guide our content strategy development.

► **ONGOING EDITORIAL PLANNING**

Once you've created a content strategy, you'll need to run monthly editorial planning meetings to ensure you stay on track. This process provides the necessary elements of discipline and accountability to ensure your team stays on message with the new brand rather than being distracted by running some fancy new marketing message.

► **STICK WITH IT FOR 3 YEARS**

No brand project is effective without implementation. One of the primary benefits from doing a shortened 6-month branding process is that you will still have energy for the required 18 months to 3 years of implementation. This effort can't be shortened and will require discipline so that your brand can start to take hold in the minds of your customers.





# CONCLUSION

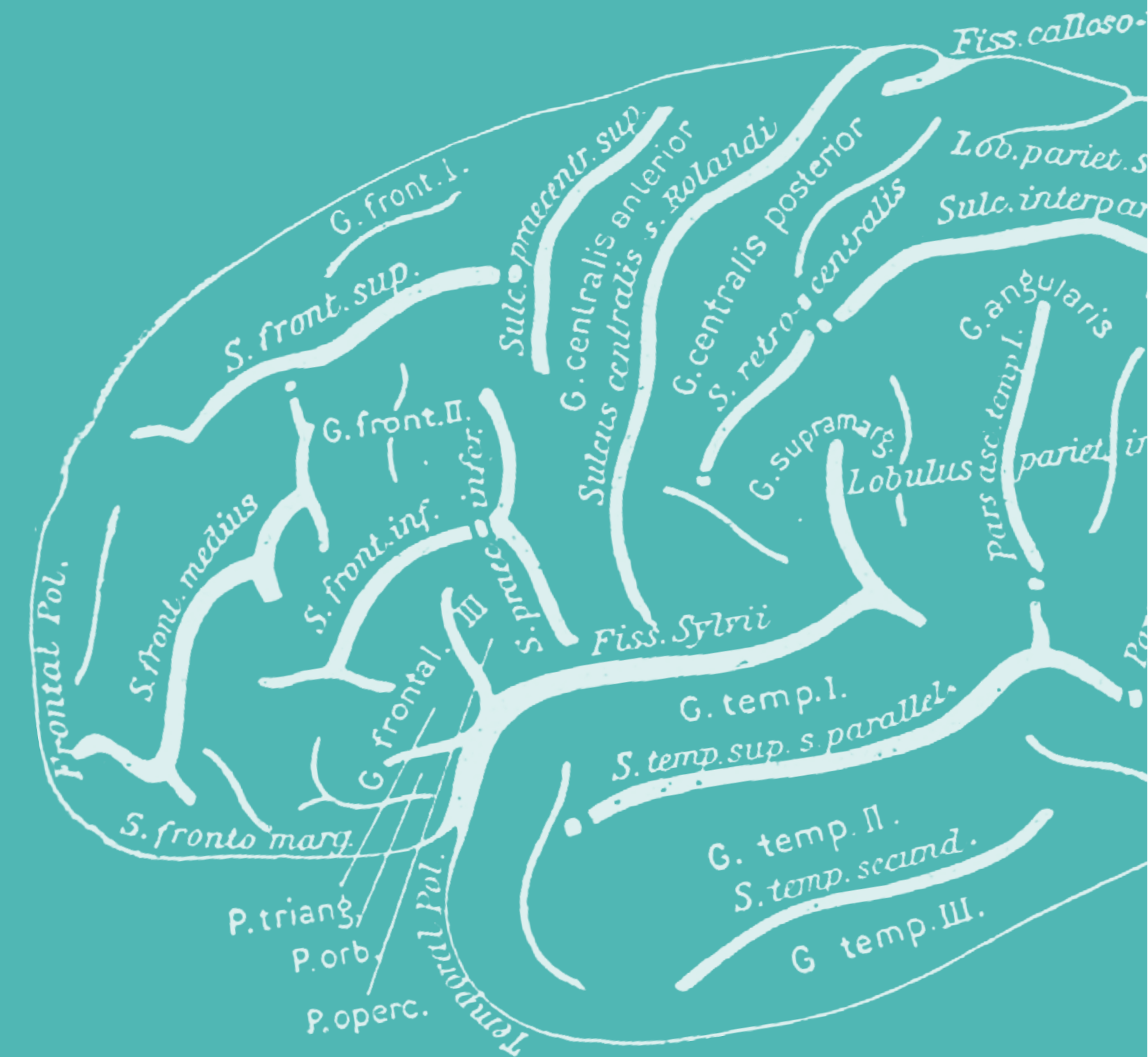
## IT TURNS OUT ALL OF US ARE IN THE MEMORY BUSINESS. THE BUSINESS OF CREATING A MEMORABLE BRAND.

We would go so far as to say that discovering the unique memory (the essence of your brand) you want to create—curate is actually probably a better word, because again we can't control people's minds—is the best way to safeguard the future of your company.

If you're looking to create a great brand, we've covered why you need to work quickly (in around 6 months) and the principles that you need to follow:

- 1 **Having a solid framework**
- 2 **Conducting just enough research**
- 3 **Focusing on more than just marketing**
- 4 **Including the right amount of aspiration**
- 5 **And leaving energy to focus on implementation**

These principles will get you started if you decide to take on the project yourself. If you'd rather work with a firm that can help you turn accelerated brand aspirations into reality, we'd love to talk.



**CONTACT US** ➔