

What Should a Brand Strategist Know?

A Brand Strategy Syllabus

Introduction

Good brand strategists are a rare breed. We must cultivate a keen interest in business no less than in the craft of storytelling. Beyond that, we benefit from a continuous immersion in culture. In a world of increasingly narrow and specialized skills, brand strategists remain wide-ranging generalists. This means they not only possess a wide fund of knowledge but also the skill to adapt to a variety of cultures and business situations.

The imaginary course outlined here is what we'd suggest to an aspiring strategist looking to gain enough of a technical and philosophical grounding in brand communications strategy to practice at an entry level. It introduces the various elements of the brand story and how they fit together; how to evaluate them critically and develop them creatively; how to apply them to various types of business problem; and how to use them to build actual brand deliverables. It lays out a proven brand development process, and gives a framework of understanding to engage peers and clients in conversations around relevant brand, marketing and cultural topics.

Interested? Have ideas for refining this course of study further? Let's talk.

Work Plan & Deliverables Detail

Each Week

Social Media Activity: Plan to look at your Tweets and other social media activity with an eye towards building a rich community of followers and conversations

News Sources: Plan to discuss items of interest in the blogs and news sources you are following.

Brand Platform Work: Plan to proceed with analyzing a single, specific brand in depth and then reverse-engineering brand elements from it. To the extent possible, this effort should proceed in parallel with the topics outlined below.

Week 1

Main Topic: What is a Brand? & Brand Schematics

Deliverable/Document: the brand wheel

Reading: *Lajos Egri: The Art of Dramatic Writing*

Week 2

Main Topic: Positioning

Deliverable/Document: positioning work from brand platforms

Reading: *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind; The Brand Gap*

Week 3

Main Topic: Personality

Deliverable/Document: personality profile

Reading: *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery (Riso), The Hero and the Outlaw (Mark & Pearson)*

Week 4

Main Topic: Promise, Drivers and Supporting Value Propositions

Deliverable/Document: brand promise work from brand platforms

Week 5

Main Topic: Core [Brand Essence]

Deliverable/Document: brand core work from brand platforms

Week 6

Main Topic: Descriptors, Descriptions and Taglines

Deliverable/Document: descriptor, description and tagline work

Week 7

Main Topic: Other Types of Brand Platform Deliverable

Deliverable/Document: examples of non-standard elements from various platforms

Week 8

Main Topic: Business Foundations: Vision, Mission & Strategy

Deliverable/Document: vision and mission work from platforms

Reading: *Winning* (Welch)

Week 9

Main Topic: Business Foundations: Culture, Values & Internal Brand Work

Deliverable/Document: values work from platforms

Readings: *How* (Seidman)

Week 10

Main Topic: Business Foundations: Solving Problems & Creating Opportunities

Deliverable/Document: relevant presentations

Readings: *Building the Brand-Driven Business* (Dunn), *VOI White Paper* (Gartner)

Week 11

Main Topic: Storytelling Theory & History

Deliverable/Document: none

Readings: *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl)

Week 12

Main Topic: Brand Narrative 2: Sample Narratives

Deliverable/Document: sample narratives from platforms

Week 13

Main Topic: Audience Insight & the Customer Relationship Lifecycle

Deliverable/Document: audience research documents

Week 14

Main Topic: Messaging

Deliverable/Document: sample messaging decks

Week 15

Main Topic: Visual Systems

Deliverable/Document: brand guidelines

Week 16

Main Topic: Voice

Deliverable/Document: sample voice guidelines

Week 17

Main Topic: Naming

Deliverable/Document: sample naming decks

Week 18

Main Topic: Name Systems & Brand Architectures

Deliverable/Document: sample name architectures

Week 19

Main Topic: Translating Strategy into Creative

Deliverable/Document: creative briefs and visualizations

Week 20

Main Topic: Visioning, Creativity Exercises & The Work Session

Deliverable/Document: AS visioning and creativity exercises; work session agendas

Week 21

Main Topic: Communications Planning

Deliverable/Document: sample communications plans

Week 22

Main Topic: Validation

Deliverable/Document: sample survey designs and survey findings

Week 23

Main Topic: Monitoring & Metrics

Deliverable/Document: social buzz dashboards

Week 24

Main Topic: Brand Alignment & Brand Migration

Deliverable/Document: key documents from relevant assignments

Week 25

Main Topic: Civic & Regional Brand Development

Deliverable/Document: key documents from relevant assignments

Reading: *Stories for Cities (Applied Storytelling)*

Week 26

Main Topic: Personal Brand Development

Deliverable/Document: key documents from relevant assignments

Week 27

Main Topic: The Future of Brands & Storytelling