

FINIEN

YOUR BRAND **LAUNCH**

02

**HOW TO GAIN SWIFT STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN
DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF YOUR BRAND CREATION**

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WHY IT MATTERS

Working in the field for over 15 years and having been critically involved in over 40 brand launches, I've noticed a pattern of how you can ultimately fail to deliver a successful launch of your new brand. Most mishaps are common knowledge, but one that gets overseen too often by entrepreneurs and CMO's is gaining buy-in at the right times and from the right people. And with buy-in, it comes down to only that: timing and whom to involve. These are the key differentiators between smooth sailing with a set destination, and being adrift with no land in sight (as it pertains to your launch). This Finien white paper will ensure you don't fall into this hidden, but deadly trap in the launch process - it will save you time, money, and most importantly, sanity.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE POWERS TO BE

You might think of this as an easy task, but most of the time the resistance comes from sources that were not properly, or never identified. Here is a breakdown, split into two scenarios of the different types of brand launchers: (A) the startup entrepreneur and (B) the CMO launching a new product or service within an existing brand. You need to focus on how your brand will be launched, and based on our experience and research, it will be mainly through your website.

SCENARIO A - YOU ARE A STARTUP LAUNCHING YOUR OWN BRAND

1. Your Partners

Clearly you will not make decisions without them, but ensure that if you have a Project Manager (or even an assistant) who is collecting feedback, that all of your partners are part of the discussion at all times. Of course you or your delegated Project Manager will voice that feedback only after it has been vetted and approved by yourself, to the agency working with you on the brand creation effort.

2. Your Significant Other

You may think I am kidding, but projects fail, or get postponed because someone client-side decided not to get 'buy-in' at home. Clearly, this should not be a deciding factor as your significant other only knows a very small percentage about the strategy, insights gained and vision determined for the new brand. Your significant other may not have influence on the project, but (s)he has influence on you. Too often, input from a significant other causes cold feet about a decision that has already been made - usually at the eleventh hour - thus derailing the launch. Don't be that person. It brings down team morale, lowers your ego and can lead to significant timeline delays.

3. Shareholders / Investors

As obvious as it seems, most often this is not taken seriously enough; the final brand identity is just quickly shown to an investor, mainly because you are proud of it and because you just happen to have lunch with that person. But this is the wrong tactic to truly gain shareholder buy-in. You have to include your shareholders at pre-defined points within the process. They need to be aware of the opportunity and can choose to weigh in their position or neglect it. Depending on the size of your group, it is usually an even split of involvement versus 'I can't make it to the meeting, I am sure the team will make a great decision without me'. But be prepared, one or two shareholders may get overly involved and bombard you with opinionated voices and may try to dominate meetings. And that's okay - but only in those meetings, and only at those designated times. As the project progresses these voices will slowly begin to feel heard and will eventually turn into approval. And there's a payoff: they will be doing so with the same enthusiasm and raised voice. Needless to say, having a seasoned and talented individual who is leading these meetings on the agency side is crucial.

4. Your Employees

With good reason, I place your employees last. Partly because you might not have a lot of staff at this stage of your startup, but even if you do, this is your brand, and often it means that both your professional and financial future are on the line. It's a big deal. For you. Not for them. They just took a gig that might pay off in the future. Perhaps, but maybe not, oh well, they'd move on. For you, this is your baby and you've invested a lot into getting it to this stage. Your staff will stay on board regardless of what name, identity design or website structure and design you strategically select.

“Don't forget they look at you to be a leader and leaders make tough and important decisions for their employees. Be that leader.”

For you it means a lot to the direction your brand will take. To them it's just a name and a design that they will live with. Make sure to not let the startup atmosphere of pizza nights and 'we are all in this together' sense of democracy spill into the strategy of your branding, it rarely helps. Instead, it often derails the project and creates chatter and a feeling of unease amongst your staff. Don't forget they look at you to be a leader and leaders make tough and important decisions for their employees. Be that leader. In the end, you do them a favor by not asking them their thoughts every ten minutes. If that scares you, know that you already gained insights via the opinions from the powers above (and by that I mean the individuals listed in # 1-3).

SCENARIO B - YOU ARE AN EXISTING COMPANY LAUNCHING A NEW BRAND

You are likely a CMO or VP of Marketing and are being tasked with the launch of a new brand within an existing flagship, so you already have the key decision makers on your project team: a creative director, a superior (President of Marketing or alike), a senior copywriter (if applicable) and a project manager (if you are lucky enough). They are all briefed regularly and play active roles in the decision making process on a daily basis.

The person that is usually forgotten to get early and regular buy-in from is the CEO and his or her immediate 'entourage'. It is difficult to clearly define 'entourage', but it usually includes some blend of the top two or three shareholders, CEO's of partner companies, and even handpicked VP's of various departments within the firm you may have never thought (or wished) to include. And why is his or her assistant voicing their opinion? Well, when it comes to the CEO, let the CEO decide how their opinion is formed and whom they wish to include in buy-in meetings. But ensure all is done within a clearly outlined agenda and timeframe, which brings us to the process of gaining your easy buy-in.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY WHEN THE POWERS SHALL BE BROUGHT INTO THE PROCESS

A day not too long ago at our consultancy, when chaos erupted and everyone tried their best to throw a wrench into a project timeline, our key client contact, an Academy Award© winning screenwriter who shall remain anonymous, said these wise words to me in an email:

‘Opinions are like #@*holes - everybody has one.’

It made my day (actually it spread quickly through the office and made everyone’s day), but more importantly it got us back on track, opinions were noted, and we moved on focusing on the key client contacts feedback paired with our recommendations.

Now that we defined who should be brought in to the buy-in process, we need to clearly outline when, and just as important, when not to let opinions be heard. Both done correctly will ensure easy and early buy-in, not only into the decision at hand, but also the process, the agency and your team. It will enable you to steer the ship while being greeted with ongoing enthusiasm from everyone involved, even the highest levels within your company (AKA your significant other, if you are in a startup situation). Done incorrectly, the project timeline will derail, morale will go down and your job (or future company) may be on the line.

GAINING STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

Reference this chart to determine at which milestones in the brand launch process you should be gaining buy-in from your stakeholders.

PHASE 1 | Research & Brand Development Insights

1. Discovery Interviews
2. Discovery Intensive (3 hours)
3. Competitor/Industry Research & Analysis
4. Discovery Workshop (2 hours)
5. Presentation of Brand Development Insights

PHASE 2 | Naming

1. Naming Presentation: 4 Names
2. Feedback
3. Naming Presentation: 2 Names
4. Name Acceptance
5. Preliminary Trademark Search Concluded
6. Domain Name Transfer to Client Initiated

PHASE 3 | Identity Design

1. Identity Design Presentation: 3 Designs
2. Feedback
3. Identity Design Presentation: Refinements or 2 New Designs
4. Feedback
5. Identity Presentation: Finalized Design
6. Identity Design Acceptance
7. Share Marketing Plan with Finien

PHASE 4 | Brand Atmosphere (Optional)

1. Brand Atmosphere Presentation
2. Feedback
3. Presentation of Final Books

PHASE 5 | Website Structure & Design

1. Website Kick-Off (4 hours)
2. Presentation of Rough Site Map and Scope Document 1.0
3. Feedback
4. Presentation of Wireframe Prototype and Scope Document 2.0
5. Feedback
6. Presentation of Final Wireframe Prototype & Scope Document 3.0
7. Acceptance of Final Wireframe Prototype & Final Scope Document
8. Design Presentation: Landing & Subpage (2 Design Directions)
9. Feedback
10. Design Presentation: Revised or New Landing & Subpage Design
11. Design Acceptance with Minor Modifications
12. Design Presentation: Set 1/2 + Landing & Subpage Responsive Views
13. Feedback
14. Design Presentation: Revisions Presented
15. Design Acceptance
16. Website Style Guide PDF sent to Client

PHASE 6 | Follow Up

	STARTUPS			EXISTING	
	Partners	Shareholders	Significant Other*	Project Team	CEO**
1. Discovery Interviews	●			●	
2. Discovery Intensive (3 hours)	●			●	
3. Competitor/Industry Research & Analysis					
4. Discovery Workshop (2 hours)				●	
5. Presentation of Brand Development Insights	●	●		●	
PHASE 2 Naming					
1. Naming Presentation: 4 Names	●	●	●	●	
2. Feedback					
3. Naming Presentation: 2 Names				●	●
4. Name Acceptance					
5. Preliminary Trademark Search Concluded					
6. Domain Name Transfer to Client Initiated					
PHASE 3 Identity Design					
1. Identity Design Presentation: 3 Designs	●		●	●	
2. Feedback					
3. Identity Design Presentation: Refinements or 2 New Designs				●	●
4. Feedback					
5. Identity Presentation: Finalized Design				●	
6. Identity Design Acceptance					
7. Share Marketing Plan with Finien					
PHASE 4 Brand Atmosphere (Optional)					
1. Brand Atmosphere Presentation				●	
2. Feedback					
3. Presentation of Final Books				●	
PHASE 5 Website Structure & Design					
1. Website Kick-Off (4 hours)	●			●	
2. Presentation of Rough Site Map and Scope Document 1.0					
3. Feedback					
4. Presentation of Wireframe Prototype and Scope Document 2.0				●	
5. Feedback					
6. Presentation of Final Wireframe Prototype & Scope Document 3.0					
7. Acceptance of Final Wireframe Prototype & Final Scope Document				●	
8. Design Presentation: Landing & Subpage (2 Design Directions)	●			●	
9. Feedback					
10. Design Presentation: Revised or New Landing & Subpage Design					
11. Design Acceptance with Minor Modifications					
12. Design Presentation: Set 1/2 + Landing & Subpage Responsive Views				●	
13. Feedback					
14. Design Presentation: Revisions Presented					
15. Design Acceptance					
16. Website Style Guide PDF sent to Client					
PHASE 6 Follow Up					

*Run these items by your significant other outside of working hours | ** Ensure that the CEO has been briefed on the items noted in these milestones

Keep this document on-hand when you plan your (next) brand launch. Share it with your project team and agency partner(s) prior to taking the important first brand naming and realization steps. Make sure these dates are implemented by the agency developing these crucial aspects of your new brand.

I hope this was convincing enough for you to take the step and implement our advice.

Please share your opinion or own findings with me via fgeyrhalter@finien.com or engage with us to take you there safe and sound ourselves. I look forward to hearing from you!