

FINIEN™

# 01. YOUR BRAND LAUNCH

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5 INGREDIENTS OF A STRONG BRAND FOUNDATION

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## WHY IT MATTERS

If we think of your new brand as a building, the Brand Platform is the foundation upon which the construction takes place. If the foundation is strong and well considered, anything built on it has a higher chance of being equally sturdy. Too often, new brands rush to create a visual identity before having a firm Brand Platform in place, essentially putting a beautifully designed cart miles before the horse. Before your chosen design firm begins any work, you want to have a keen understanding of your new brand's benefits, marketplace, target audience, and personality.

A good Brand Platform addresses all of these areas, assessing every aspect and association within your future brand. The platform contains both the tangible (such as the selling points of a product) and the intangible (such as the attitude of the brand). Working systematically, a Brand Platform explores all of these areas, culminating in a holistic portrait of your brand-to-be.

### **Business Plan vs. Brand Platform**

You may think, "I already have a business plan, so I'm set." Wrong. It might help to think of a Business Plan as something that offers an answer to the question of "what" and "how" while a Brand Platform answers the "why" and "who."

Business Plans often include a description of the company, market analysis, marketing plans, and revenue projections. A Brand Platform, however, will get to the soul of your service/product to help you strategize the best tactics for branding your company in a way that will emotionally connect to, and engage your target audience.

# 5 INGREDIENTS OF A STRONG BRAND FOUNDATION

## 1. Construct a Philosophy

Chances are that you and your team have already constructed a mission statement for your brand. Asking thoughtful questions to arrive at a more meaningful set of values can help you create an even deeper philosophy:

***Why does this brand exist?***

***Is there a compelling story behind the brand?***

***How could your brand experiment and grow, moving forward?***

***Can you identify a global need that your brand is uniquely able to fulfill?***

Consumers now want more out of their brands than products and sales. Let's look at outdoor retailer Patagonia to see this method in action: (Responses from Patagonia.com's company information)

***Why does this brand exist?***

"Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis."

***Is there a compelling story behind the brand?***

"Patagonia grew out of a small company that made tools for climbers. Alpinism remains at the heart of a worldwide business that still makes clothes for climbing—as well as for skiing snowboarding, surfing, fly fishing, paddling and trail running. These are all silent sports. None requires a motor. In each sport, reward comes in the form of hard-won grace and moments of connection between us and nature."

***How could your brand experiment and grow, moving forward?***

"We know that our business activity—from lighting stores to dyeing shirts—creates pollution as a by-product. So we work steadily to reduce those harms. We use recycled polyester in many of our clothes and only organic—rather than pesticide-intensive—cotton."

***Can you identify a global need that your brand is uniquely able to fulfill?***

"For us at Patagonia, a love of wild and beautiful places demands participation in the fight to save them and to help reverse the steep decline in the overall environmental health of our planet. We donate our time, services, and at least 1% of our sales to hundreds of grassroots environmental groups all over the world who work to help reverse the tide."

– From Patagonia's Mission Statement, (source: [tinyurl.com/brandlaunch01](https://tinyurl.com/brandlaunch01))

## **2. Craft a Personality**

Consumers respond to brands with a coherent and straightforward message. Equally important is selecting a distinctive voice and persona for your company. The audience demands authenticity, and your brand's voice must be authentic and transparent. You can achieve this in a number of ways, be it through a relatable character (remember Apple's "I'm a Mac" guy?), a user's perspective (Ford's "Drive One" campaign), or company personnel (Virgin's Richard Branson, or Kashi Cereal's use of real employees). Characters give the audience someone to root for and to follow (think of the success of Dos Equis' "Most Interesting Man in the World"). In digital and social media, a brand character can gain a devoted following, solidifying the bond between brand and buyer. At fifty-five years old, Mr. Clean proves the importance of a strong brand character with 28,300 —mostly female—followers on Twitter (as of April 2018).

Thinking of your brand as a person helps create an authentic voice that will connect with consumers.

Writing a list of adjectives that describe your brand can be helpful in creating that persona:

### YOUR BRAND CHARACTER

*Choose from the following adjectives to help you get started:*

<i>Bold</i>	<i>Innovative</i>	<i>Caring</i>
<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Light-hearted</i>
<i>Serious</i>	<i>Calm</i>	<i>Rational</i>
<i>Adventurous</i>	<i>Luxurious</i>	<i>Witty</i>
<i>Imaginative</i>	<i>Humorous</i>	<i>Altruistic</i>
<i>Neat</i>	<i>Mysterious</i>	<i>Tough</i>
<i>Youthful</i>	<i>Elegant</i>	<i>Rugged</i>
<i>Dependable</i>	<i>Warm</i>	<i>Sexy</i>
<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Healthy</i>	<i>Leader</i>
<i>Authoritative</i>	<i>Worldly</i>	<i>Relaxed</i>
<i>Quiet</i>	<i>Glamorous</i>	<i>Quirky</i>
<i>Strong</i>	<i>Old-Fashioned</i>	<i>Intellectual</i>
<i>Whimsical</i>	<i>Sweet</i>	<i>Clever</i>
<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Feisty</i>
<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Gentle</i>	<i>Stoic</i>
<i>Cooperative</i>	<i>Humble</i>	<i>Spiritual</i>
<i>Edgy</i>	<i>Energetic</i>	<i>Liberal</i>
<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Serious</i>	<i>Rebellious</i>

All good brands have a personality archetype that fall into one of these categories:

**Dreamer:** idealistic, different, creative (Apple, Lego)

**Joker:** fun, playful (Doritos, Arrogant Bastard)

**Seductress:** desirable, sexy (Victoria's Secret, Virgin)

**Rebel:** rebellious, dangerous (Red Bull, Harley Davidson)

**Hero:** adventurous, brave (Jeep, Nike)

**Sage:** trustworthy, intelligent (NPR, Tesla)

**Leader:** assertive, in control (Mercedes Benz, Rolex)

**Mother:** generous, caring (Dove, Cheerios)

**Friend:** straightforward, sociable (Target, Zappos)

### 3. Discover How you Differentiate

Today's consumers have more choices than ever before. When they are looking for at-home entertainment they can pick from hundreds of television channels and online streaming services. When consumers shop online, they have access to millions of stores and brands. There are even thousands of toothpaste options on the market. With so much competition, brands need a way to stand out and capture their audience's attention. All a brand needs is one strong point of difference to distinguish it from the competition.

To ensure you differentiate from your competitors, make a list of the features and attributes of your service/product. Features refer to specific functionality (i.e. 'slip-proof grip') while attributes refer to non-tangible benefits (i.e. 'inexpensive'). From there, compare the features and attributes of your brand with your competitors in a Venn Diagram noting where you overlap, where your competitors have unique qualities, and where you differentiate:



## 4. Identify your Ideal Audience

You obviously need the consumer to buy into your brand. To reach that audience, you need to understand them and know how to communicate so they will listen. Knowing your audience is a critical aspect of your brand's success.

In his memoir and manual, *On Writing*, author Stephen King advocates writing for an "Ideal Reader;" for King, it is his wife, Tabitha. By focusing on one individual, King can ignore the compelling need to please every reader in the world and instead deliver a solid and focused story. Communicating your brand to an audience takes a similar approach. As stated earlier, your brand will never appeal to everyone, but it can appeal to a specific market and enjoy enormous success.

Envision your ideal consumer: the person most apt to be interested in purchasing your product or service. Consider how they are represented in the following demographic categories: gender, age, location, ethnicity, income, education level, mobility, home ownership, marital status, and children. A typical demographic profile might be: single African-American female, middle-class, age 18-24, living in urban areas, college education, with no children.

Of course, not all people in this demographic are exactly the same, and some will not conform to the profile. This is where you will need to consider your audience's psychographic variables by drilling deeper into their personality and considering things such as their values, attitudes, activities, opinions, and anything else you can think of that will narrow your focus. A typical psychographic profile might be: outgoing trendsetter who loves the nightlife, shopping, and fashion; willing to splurge on clothes and cosmetics that make her look her best.

You can further flesh out your understanding of your ideal consumer by imagining a day in their life: what brands they prefer, whether or not they impulse shop, whether they're bargain hunters or social shoppers, and if they have any specific interests or family concerns. Creating image boards—"collages" or "mood boards" of your different target audience personas—can help you to better visualize and connect with them.

## 5. Create a Positioning Statement

What makes your brand unique? Why will consumers be drawn to your product? How does the audience perceive your brand? These critical questions play into your brand's place in the market: its Positioning. Concretely defining your brand's position is crucial in that it serves as a backbone for developing a business direction, marketing message, and overall identity.

Note that Positioning is not the same as concept. The idea behind the brand is concept, whereas Positioning articulates the benefits to the consumer. You may have the most brilliant idea for a brand, but if you cannot compel the consumer to make a purchase, you have nothing.

The Positioning of a brand serves to define two points:

- ***What the product does***
- ***How the product is viewed by the target audience in the competitive landscape, in the short and long term***

Simplistic as it may sound, it can help to think of your brand in terms of problem and solution. What daily struggle does your brand alleviate? Does your product or service help the consumer save time or money? Will it make them feel fulfilled, give an esteem boost, or provide them with a noteworthy experience? Put yourself in your audience's shoes: why should they buy into your brand? All Positioning falls into one of three categories:

- ***Functional (solves a problem or provides a tangible benefit)***
- ***Symbolic (provides a feeling of belonging or self-image benefit)***
- ***Experiential (provides physical or mental stimulation)***

The Positioning statement (as developed by consultant Geoffrey Moore) provides a clear, nuts-and-bolts description of your brand and should take the following form:

***“To (target audience), our product is the (category) that provides (functional, symbolic or experiential benefits) because (support/reasons to believe).”***

Here is an example of a hypothetical Positioning statement (inspired by the Whole Foods public mission statement) that could support the Whole Foods brand:

***To health and eco-conscious consumers, our grocery stores sell the highest quality natural and organic products that support vitality and well-being because we believe in Whole Foods, Whole People, and a Whole Planet.***

Throughout the brand development process, we recommend that you regularly reference your Brand Platform. As the backbone for your brand launch, the Brand Platform should be carefully considered and fine-tuned. The 5 components of a strong brand foundation discussed in this white paper are a synopsis of the most important ingredients required to create a true Brand Platform. For further reading on developing a full Brand Platform, please refer to my book, [How to Launch a Brand](#).

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*Abbreviated portions of this White Paper are taken from our Brandtro book entitled [“How to Launch a Brand.”](#)*

Keep this document on-hand when you plan your (next) brand launch and share it with your project team when planning your brand's vision and purpose.

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



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