

PUBLICATION
NOVEMBER 2024

THE TRUTH ABOUT
MARKETING - AND WHY
IT IS CRITICAL TO YOUR
EMERGING COMPANY



PERSISTENT



BY
JOY RUKUNDO

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOY RUKUNDO

Joy is Persistent's Marketing and Communication Manager, where she is responsible for all of the firm's branding, strategy, marketing and communication. She is also a Venture Builder, working with climate impact companies on their brand development and marketing and communications strategies.

WHO IS THIS ARTICLE FOR?

If you're an entrepreneur eager to launch your new idea, or a start-up aiming to revolutionize your sector with a new strategy, then this article is for you.

Here is guidance that can help think through the development of your brand management and marketing strategy, including steps that can make it easier to build a successful brand.

This article will look at the difference between value, strategy, branding, and marketing. It will explain why it is important to separate them, as well as how you can drive each of them successfully.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

The term "marketing" has evolved significantly over the years, leading to a loss of clarity about its true meaning. Marketing is not merely about promoting a product or service in the marketplace; it encompasses a broader scope, including market research, product development, pricing, distribution strategy, sales, and advertising - all aimed at converting potential customers into actual customers. This comprehensive approach is often encapsulated by the four P's of marketing: **Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.**





The four P's of Marketing

A common issue arises when companies narrowly focus marketing solely on promotion, neglecting the other three P's - Product, Price, and Place. This selective approach can result in products that are not thoroughly considered or understood, with strategies primarily aimed at boosting sales figures rather than delivering true value.

Promotion is undoubtedly important, but it must be balanced with a deep understanding of a product's core values. Before initiating promotional activities, it is crucial to clearly define the product's value and its relevance to the target audience. Only then can the promotional strategy effectively communicate and deliver this value proposition to consumers.

In today's competitive environment, excelling at marketing requires a paradigm shift from a narrow focus on promotion to a more holistic and integrated strategy. Startups, in particular, should embrace this comprehensive approach, ensuring that every aspect of their operations - from product development to customer engagement, to overarching brand strategy - is thoughtfully executed. By adopting this full-spectrum approach, companies can engage more effectively with their markets, deliver exceptional value, and establish a sustainable competitive advantage.

Let's dive deeper into this by looking at the term values.

STARTING WITH THE BASICS: WHAT IS YOUR PRODUCT VALUE? - QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE JUMPING INTO MARKETING.

This approach is not only the simplest and most effective but also the most ethical and satisfying way to conduct business. Adopting this perspective leads to an inevitable realization: marketing is a crucial function of any business, as it is the activity through which a business determines the value it will offer to its customers.

"Business is the practice of delivering value to people"
- Alex H Smith



At its core, every business functions as a mechanism to deliver value and, in return, receive value. While it's possible to establish a business that strays from this principle and still achieves financial success, such ventures miss the essence of true business. Genuine business practices are centered around the creation and provision of value.



BEYOND MARKETING: THE POWER OF VALUES

Before crafting any marketing strategy, the value of your product and its relevance to your target audience must be crystal clear. This clarity allows your strategy to effectively communicate and deliver on your value proposition. Value-driven strategies don't just shape your offerings; they inject your unique perspective into the marketplace.

These values, intertwined with your strategic goals, become your "secret sauce" - the distinctive elements that differentiate you from the competition and unlock new market opportunities.



Your unique value is the exclusive benefit you provide to your customers, tailored in a way that is irreplaceable and highly sought after by a significant segment of your target audience. It is this primary value that your customers are willing to invest in, compelling them to choose your product over others.

By focusing on these core aspects, your marketing efforts can achieve greater impact, fostering deeper connections with your customers and solidifying your market position.

HOW DOES YOUR PRODUCT VALUE COMPARE WITH YOUR COMPETITORS'?

The short answer is: They should not compare.

In an ideal scenario, your product value establishes a distinct and exclusive market position that competitors cannot replicate. If you go by the same value as others in your market, you risk your brand blending in with the competition, which you should obviously avoid.

Remember that identifying your unique value proposition is better than trying to become the best at something that someone else is already doing.

It is therefore necessary that you determine who you are, and stay true to your purpose, i.e., your value add. However, if you choose to align your value with those of your competitors, focus on their weaknesses rather than trying to compete with their strengths.

DELIVERABLES

Once you have identified your unique product value, you are ready to think of the “How” - your strategy.

[Alex H Smith](#), in his book [“No Bullsh*t Strategy”](#) suggests some of the following options to form your values into strategy:

- Keep asking yourself “How?” until you have the ultimate answer:
 - I want to offer renewable energy for low-income families - How? - By providing them with technologies which they can easily access directly from their homes - How? - By offering them a PayGo system that will cost them only a small upfront payment ...
- The opposite must always make sense
 - Solar Company xy: “Powering your day with the sun.”

Does that mean that the other solar companies don't use the sun to give you power throughout your day?



- Focus on your market's attention span. Be aware of whether you are a low- or a high-interest category startup and start dealing with it. Your audience needs to understand what you are doing in the blink of a moment. Therefore have your message clear.
- Avoid diving too deeply into outdated achievements. Claiming, “We are truly sustainable because our product isn’t packaged in plastic” is no longer distinctive - it’s expected. Instead, strategically select areas where your unique value can make a significant impact.

There are many other strategies in addition to those described above and, with a little research you will find or develop a suitable one for your business.

Once you think you have identified your strategy, ask yourself why it would be a good thing to succeed with this strategy. These are your value benefits, and your product should ideally relate to at least one of them:



- **Consumer Benefit:** This refers to the emotional, psychological, or experiential advantages that a product or service offers to the consumer. - A consumer benefit of buying a Tesla car might be the feeling of prestige, status, or confidence it gives the owner.
- **Functional Benefit:** This refers to the practical, tangible features and outcomes of using a product or service. A functional benefit of a solar panel system is that it provides renewable energy, reducing electricity bills.
- **Social Benefit:** Focuses on how the product or company contributes to society, addressing broader societal, environmental, or ethical issues. A **social impact** benefit of a solar company might be its role in reducing carbon emissions, fighting climate change, or bringing affordable renewable energy to underserved communities. This goes beyond individual or functional benefits to show how the company's work has a positive effect on society as a whole.

Identifying which benefits are most valued by your target customers can significantly impact how to build your strategy.

If your product value is clear, and you have now identified a strategy that helps you to reach your target customers, then it's time to start with your brand management and marketing.

SEPARATION FROM THE CORE: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRANDING AND MARKETING

WHY YOUR COMPANY NEEDS A BRAND ID?

Your Brand Identification (Brand ID) and Brand Guidelines are the visual representation of your company values. Your Brand ID consists of your logo, chosen fonts, and color palette. Your Brand Guidelines dictate how these elements - logo, fonts, and colors - should be applied across your company's products, printed materials, and digital presence. Both your Brand ID and Guidelines should be consistently implemented across all channels, ensuring that your brand is easily recognizable in the market.



Your Brand Identification (Brand ID) and Guidelines are the visual representation of your company values. Consistent implementation across all channels ensures your brand is easily recognizable in the market.



Your Brand Identification (Brand ID) and Brand Guidelines are the visual representation of your company values. Your Brand ID consists of your logo, chosen fonts, and color palette. Your Brand Guidelines dictate how these elements - logo, fonts, and colors - should be applied across your company's products, printed materials, and digital presence. Both your Brand ID and Guidelines should be consistently implemented across all channels, ensuring that your brand is easily recognizable in the market.



Here are 10 tips to consider when designing your logo:

- **Simplicity:** A simple logo design ensures that the logo is easy to recognize.
- **Distinctiveness:** The logo should be distinctive enough to be memorable. This helps in creating a lasting impression on the audience.
- **Relevance:** Ensure the logo aligns with your business' industry, values, and target audience. It should communicate something about the company's essence or what it offers.
- **Versatility:** A good logo functions well across different mediums and applications. It should look great on everything from a website favicon to a large billboard and in both color and black and white
- **Timelessness:** Aim for a design that won't feel outdated in a few years. Avoid overly trendy designs that may not age well.
- **Scalability:** The logo should maintain its integrity and be legible at any size, whether it's on a small business card or the side of a truck.
- **Appropriate Color Usage:** Colors have psychological associations and can convey messages quickly. Choose colors that reflect the brand's values and are appealing to its target audience.
- **Font Selection:** If your logo includes text, the font should complement and enhance the logo. Choose a typeface that is legible and harmonious with the overall design.
- **Originality:** The logo should be unique to stand out from competitors. Avoid clichés or overused visuals within your industry.
- **Feedback and Testing:** Gather feedback from various sources, including potential customers, to gauge the effectiveness of the logo. Adjust the design based on this feedback to ensure it resonates well with your target audience



Your logo is not your brand—it's a representation of your company's values. The real power lies in the emotional connection and experience your brand creates for customers

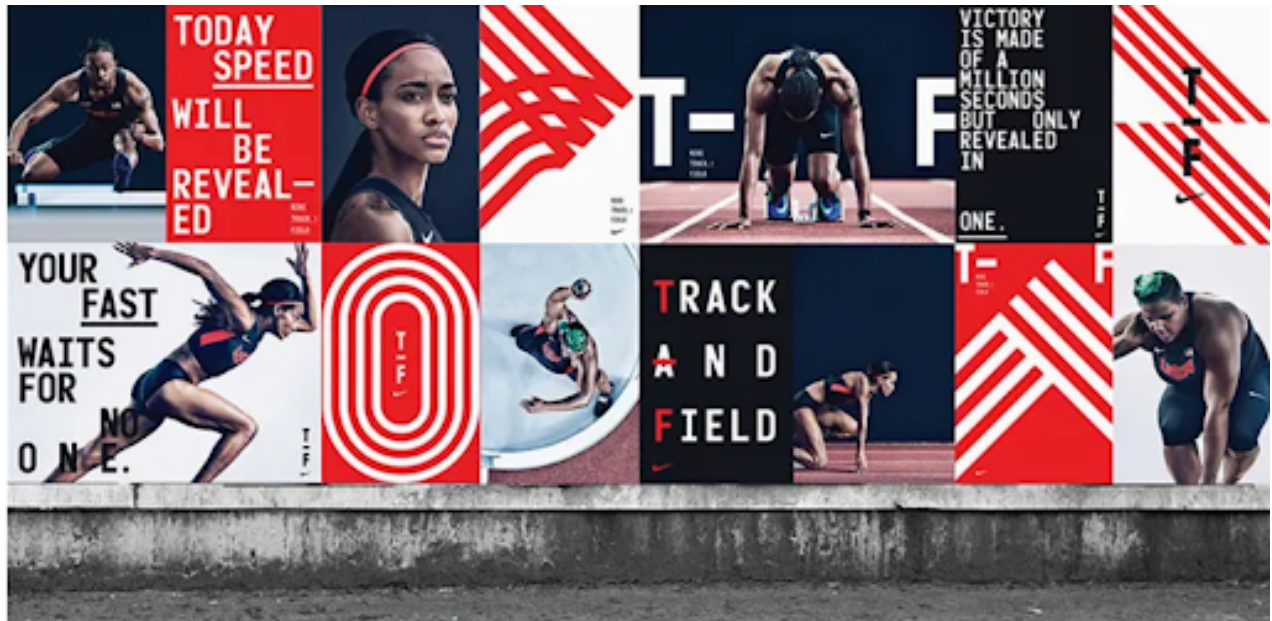


Don't forget: Your logo is the representation of your company's values - **meaning, your logo is not your brand.** It is rather the values you communicate, and the promise that you make. Your brand is the emotional connection you have with your clients - it's how your clients feel consuming and using your product or service. It is the experience you give your customers and the reputation you have on the market.



QUESTION:

Can you guess the brands behind the images below, without seeing their logo



Answer: Build and Nike brand team: Track and Field 2016



Answer: Apple AirPods Pro Billboard - as seen on movia.media

WHY YOUR COMPANY NEEDS A BRAND ID?

If you have reached this point of the article you have understood that the following activities are just the cherry on your cake. Your product value and your strategy are already clear and understood by your audience.



Your **brand communication** is now responsible for how you convey your company and product values to your audience with the help of branding through various channels. It's an integral part of marketing that encompasses all the ways a company interacts with its customers, stakeholders, and the public. It encompasses a range of strategies to maintain a consistent and positive brand image.

Your **marketing** encompasses a broader range of activities aimed at driving sales and increasing market share. It aims to identify potential customers and convert them into actual buyers. This extensive field includes market research, product development, pricing, distribution strategies, sales, and advertising. Your primary goal here is to drive sales and increase profitability.

This comprehensive approach ensures that every aspect of the marketing strategy works cohesively to achieve the desired business outcomes.

In essence, brand communication is a subset of marketing focused on the message and consistency of the brand across all touchpoints. Meanwhile, marketing is an overarching discipline that not only involves communication but also includes the strategic planning and execution of actions aimed at boosting business performance. Brand communication ensures that the marketing strategy is aligned with the brand's core identity and values, helping to forge a strong connection with the audience.



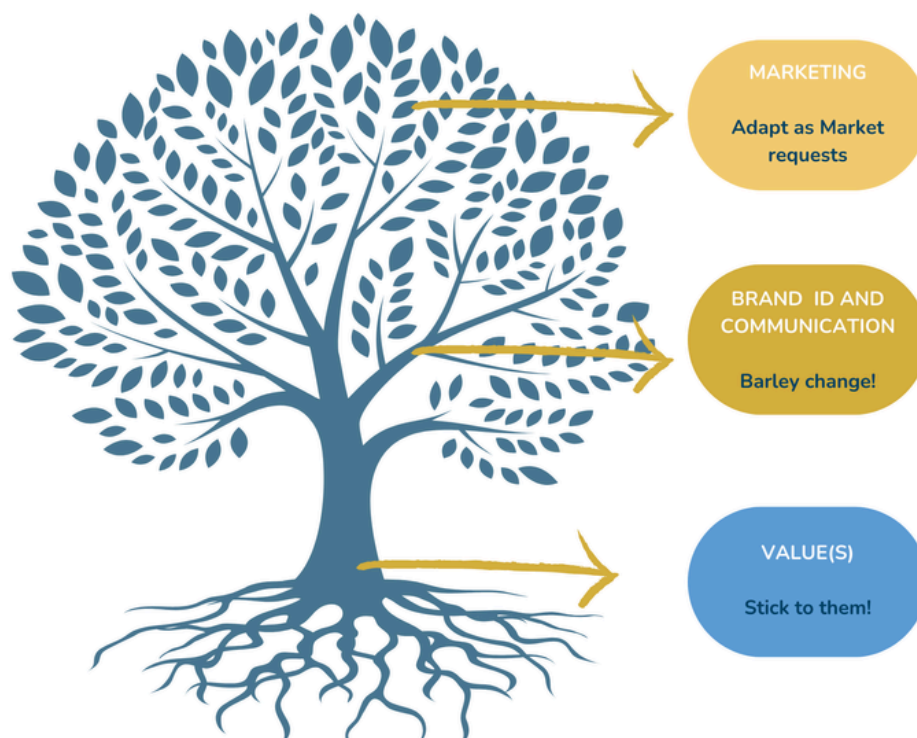
YOUR FUTURE AS A BRAND: ONLY MOVE TO STAND YOUR GROUND

With all the groundwork and effort you have put in the above steps, it goes without saying that you should now focus on making the numbers and growing your business. And this is exactly what your audience expects from you - Consistency is the key to being recognized by your audience and revisited by your clients. It is therefore crucial not to compromise your values and branding at the first sign of challenges in the market.

SO HOW TO REACT TO AN EVER-CHANGING MARKET?

Imagine your brand as a tree and divide it into three levels: The trunk, the branches, and the leaves. The trunk represents your company values, strategy, and the product itself. The branches are your brand ID and your brand communication, while the leaves are your marketing.

Now, imagine the wind as the blowing market that can force your startup to move. Which part of your tree moves the most? Exactly, the leaves. The trunk stands firm - your values persist. Your branches could (if needed) move slightly, which would mean an adaptation to your branding. And your leaves can change color or even be blown away with space for fresh leaves to grow - this is your marketing, which is the most adaptive part of your branding and marketing.



I hope you now recognize how important your company values and your strategy are and how important it is to get your branding right. But you also see the opportunity that your marketing has to make things right for you.

Good Luck!

ABOUT PERSISTENT

Persistent is Africa's Climate Venture Builder. For over a decade, Persistent has been a leader in developing and investing in climate-focused businesses that are part of the Energy Transition. Our investing and company building in solar energy, e-mobility and energy efficiency have positively impacted over 6 million people, avoided over 1.5 million tons of CO₂e, created 20,000 jobs, and provided clean energy services to over 15,000 SMEs.

Our approach combines equity investment with human capital support to early-stage, impact-driven companies, accelerating their pathways to scale and profitability. While we continue to focus on supporting the Energy Transition, we are beginning to invest in climate-focused businesses that are part of the Resource Transition and the Agricultural Transition. Persistent is dedicated to promoting a sustainable future while delivering exceptional returns to our investors. We are currently raising the Persistent Africa Climate Venture Builder Fund to increase our level of investing and company building.



PERSISTENT

Africa's
Climate
Venture
Builder

FOR MORE INFORMATION
KINDLY REACH OUT TO:

INFO@PERSISTENT.ENERGY

OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE
PERSISTENT.ENERGY