



Brand Atlas: Branding Intelligence Made Visible

Alina Wheeler, Joel Katz

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A company's brand is its most valuable asset. Wheeler takes the most seminal tools used by a wide variety of thought leaders and practitioners and makes the information understandable, visible, relevant, exportable and applicable. With her best-selling debut book, *Designing Brand Identity* (Wall Street Journal, Best-Seller, Spotlight 1/23/2011), now in its third edition, Alina Wheeler reinvented the marketing textbook using a straightforward style to help demystify the branding process. This new offering from Wheeler, *Brand Atlas*, builds on this user-friendly approach to aggregate and simplify the science behind branding with a unique visual teaching method suited for time-crunched professionals.

Brand Atlas follows the recent YouTube-iPhone-Pecha Kucha era trend toward fast-paced visual instruction by neglecting needless jargon and combining vivid, full-color images and easy-to-follow diagrams to break down branding principles into basic step-by-step concepts that can be immediately applied. This handy reference:

- Speaks to a broad range of stakeholders in the branding process—from CEOs to designers to brand managers
- Provides tools to integrate brand throughout the entire customer experience, build relationships based on brand, measure a brand's value, and define a brand strategy
- Contains essential information illustrated through the use of diagrams

With diagrams designed by Joel Katz, an internationally known information designer and a global authority on the visualization of complex information, *Brand Atlas* is a compact, no-nonsense guide that shows how tactical innovation in the design process is crucial to building brand assets.

More to Explore from the Book: Ten Imperatives for Branding Success



Branding is big business. For most businesses, brands represent their most valuable asset, influencing customers, prospects, investors, and employees. Companies often go through a complex internal process to identify the best branding firms to partner with -choosing from an array of global brand consultancies, design offices, or specialists in areas such as packaging, user experience, and social media.

Why do some brand initiatives just fizzle after an initial investment of capital and resources? Whether you are a consumer brand, a nonprofit, or a mid-size service business, the following imperatives ensure positive outcomes for your brand.

1. Ensure that the leadership team endorses the brand initiative and understands the process. There must be a strong mandate from the top. If the commitment to revitalize the brand is tepid, the initiative will expire, and the investment will have no return.
2. Establish clear goals and an endpoint. Why are we doing this? What are the deliverables? How will things be different at the end of the process? For example: we will have new branding guidelines to make it easier to communicate clearly and consistently about our brand to our customers and to our employees.
3. Establish clear responsibilities. Acknowledge that your investment will require company time, not just writing checks to the consultants. It's a collaborative process, and will require leadership's focus. Identify an internal person whose job it is to be the direct contact for the branding firm. They have to be a "make it happen" person with superior organizational skills, and access to the key decision makers.
4. Use a disciplined process with clear decision points and benchmarks. Agree on what the brand stands for before any creative work is done. Use a tool like the brand brief to ensure that key decision makers agree on your brand's essence, its competitive advantage, your target market, and your value proposition.
5. Stay customer centric. The best brand decisions can only be made with the customer's needs and experiences in mind. See the world through the eyes of your customers.
6. Commit to a small decision group that has the power to make the pivotal decisions that impact the brand. Do not bring in new decision-makers in the middle of the process. All decision makers must be involved and be present at all key decision points.
7. Determine if your company is truly ready to make a commitment to revitalizing your brand and implementing new brand standards. Is your company ready to invest the time, the capital and brainpower to revitalize your brand?
8. Determine how you will measure the success of this initiative. Consider benefits like employee engagement and a more effective and efficient marketing toolbox. Communicate that the brand is the most valuable resource and it's everyone's job to protect and grow that asset.
9. Use the process to build brand champions throughout your company. Launch internally first, then externally to customers. Make sure that all of your vendors have access to the new standards. Be diligent about communicating why you made these changes and what they mean. Smart organizations use the branding process to refocus stakeholders on their vision, values and mission.
10. Demonstrate—don't declare—why customers should choose you over others. Seize every opportunity to communicate your value and to differentiate your brand from others. Use the process to identify the places where you can build trust, attract new customers, and inspire customer loyalty.

The process demands a combination of investigation, strategic thinking, creativity, design excellence, and project management skills. When done right, the process can achieve remarkable results for your brand.

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