



## Create A Customer-Centric Brand Experience

Executive Overview: The Brand Experience Playbook

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### WHY READ THIS REPORT

In the age of the customer, chief marketing officers (CMOs) have a steeper hill to climb to build their brands with distracted, technology-empowered consumers. This is forcing marketers to rethink the rules of brand building. In this new era, CMOs must shift from a company-centric approach of managing a brand as an asset to a customer-centric one of creating a resonant brand experience. The brand experience playbook helps CMOs reinvent their brand building strategies to create a connected, customer-centric brand experience to 1) evangelize the brand experience imperative; 2) chart a course for the new brand experience; 3) excite, engage, and enroll the organization to follow its North Star; and 4) actively monitor and manage brand health. This report was originally published on July 19, 2012; Forrester has substantially revised it to factor in new ideas.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAND IN THE AGE OF THE CUSTOMER

Brands matter more than ever in the age of the customer. But CMOs must work harder to win and retain customer mindshare to secure market share. Firms need a customer-obsessed approach to building their brand if they are to deliver value for their customers and the balance sheet. Marketers today are faced with three critical realities when it comes to building brands.

- **Brands are significant quantifiable financial assets.** A brand is ultimately a business tool with the potential to create pricing power, market share, and market expansion. The growth in the importance of brand value over the past 30 years is unmistakable. Millward Brown calculated that more than 30% of the market capitalization of S&P 500 companies was derived from the intangible assets of the brand.<sup>1</sup> It's up to the CMO to communicate and unleash that value to the company.
- **Consumers expect more from brands.** Brands today have to work harder than ever to earn technology-empowered consumers' business. A brand must create an emotional connection with customers that goes beyond easily mimicked features and benefits. Forrester's research proves that strong, resonant brands must secure referral — to be recommended by friends and family, be preferred over other brands, and have the ability to command a premium price.<sup>2</sup>
- **Companies are losing their traditional sources of competitive advantage.** The business of building strong brands has become more critical in the age of the customer.<sup>3</sup> No industry is immune from the disruptive force of consumer-empowering technology that is eroding traditional sources of competitive advantage. As competitive barriers like manufacturing strength, distribution power, and information mastery crumble, the only sustainable competitive advantage is knowledge about and engagement with customers.



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## Employ The Brand Experience Playbook To Build A Resonant Brand

Marketers must chart a new course for their brands. By recalibrating their brand building tools as outlined in this playbook, marketers will:

- **Secure mindshare to build a sustainable brand.** In this playbook, we guide brands to forge an emotional connection with consumers that transcends easily mimicked features and benefits. Marketers will learn how to rethink outdated brand road maps to create a connected brand experience across its messages, actions, and products — to become more trusted, remarkable, unmistakable, and essential.
- **Drive deeper alignment and engagement across the organization.** As the hub of customer insight, competitive intelligence, and brand strategy, the CMO is the linchpin for leading the organization to win, serve, and retain customers. The CMO will enable the enterprise to gain new sources of competitive advantage by becoming an organization that obsesses about how customers experience their brand.<sup>4</sup> And the CMO will need to work with the CIO to ensure that customers' expectations inform the business technology agenda. In this playbook, CMOs will learn how to transform their companies by aligning executives, peers, and partners around the necessity to deliver a better brand experience.

## FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO CREATE A CONNECTED BRAND EXPERIENCE

Brand building is an increasingly challenging endeavor, but one that — when done well — creates true business value. That's why Forrester has outlined a practical approach for any CMO to guide this effort. To start your journey to build a connected brand experience, follow the four phases below (see Figure 1):

1. **Discover: Evangelize the brand experience imperative.** CMOs will learn how to set a vision for the entire enterprise that elevates the strategic importance of the brand experience. Marketers will gain access to critical consumer research that reveals the drivers of building a brand that is trusted, remarkable, unmistakable, and essential — a TRUE brand. And marketers will learn how to develop a business case for investing in the brand as a financial, operational, and strategic asset.
2. **Plan: Chart a course for the new brand experience.** Marketers will learn how to assess the maturity of their brand building capabilities. Forrester provides a strategic framework to define a North Star that guides the brand experience and outlines tools to help marketers align their brand building messages, actions, products, and services (MAP). Marketers also have access to a road map to set the journey in motion.

3. **Act: Excite, engage, and enroll the organization to follow the brand North Star.** Forrester provides a call to action for how CMOs can lead the customer-obsessed brand across the entire enterprise. We also provide a clear process for putting brand building tools into practice and an objective perspective on how to navigate the complex and ever-evolving landscape of brand marketing partners needed to assess brand building efforts.
  
4. **Optimize: Actively monitor and manage brand health.** Forrester provides practical guidance on the evolving role of agencies in brand building. Marketers will have access to benchmarking tools that enable them to compare their brand capabilities and competencies with those of their peers. Forrester also provides marketers with new frameworks for managing and monitoring brand health.

*Figure 1* The Brand Experience Playbook

DISCOVER	PLAN	ACT	OPTIMIZE
Vision	Assessment	Organization	Performance Management
Landscape	Strategic Plan	Processes	Benchmarks
Business Case	Road Map	Tools And Technology	Continuous Improvement

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Source: Jim Stengel, *Grow: How Ideals Power Growth and Profit at the World's Greatest Companies*, Crown Business, 2011.
- <sup>2</sup> To learn more about the drivers of brand resonance, see the July 8, 2013, "[Navigate To A 21st Century Brand With The TRUE Brand Compass](#)" report.
- <sup>3</sup> In the age of the customer, customer obsession is the only sustainable competitive advantage. See the October 10, 2013, "[Competitive Strategy In The Age Of The Customer](#)" report.
- <sup>4</sup> Forrester has enhanced its Customer Experience Index (CXi) methodology so CXi scores link customer perceptions directly to business value. See the June 26, 2014, "[Introducing Forrester's Next-Generation Customer Experience Index](#)" report.

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