

HANSONDESIGN

25 Years of Brand Design Wisdom.





Brand Design Wisdom.

Gilman Hanson



An exceptional brand moment happens in an instant. It can occur while you're driving down 5th Avenue. Maybe it happens while you're scrolling aimlessly on an app. Or perhaps it hits you as you're walking through a thoughtfully-constructed retail experience. It's a feeling that materializes as an aha! that comes out of your mouth involuntarily. That reaction symbolizes immediate brand recognition and affiliation, and I've learned that it's often a result of a brand's clear intentions and its honest relationship with its audience.

As a brand strategist and design director for over 25 years, I have created and implemented brands for clients all over the world. The success of a brand lies within its ability to connect with people. Whether it's a product, service, app, or person, the success behind every well-performing brand begins by establishing purpose and clarity about the brand's market positioning and intention and then communicating that to the audience.

Making Your Brand Stick

The ideal brand experience is fun, meaningful, and, most of all, it sticks. For a brand to be sticky, it obliges the audience to stop and remark about their experience with the brand, and it often creates a lasting memory that compels them to share that experience with others.

Lead design thinker at Sonic Rim, Uday Dandavate, suggests that;

“Brands need to create a memory that is continually evolving. It's not just the 'brand voice' – it's more about how you create a moment, a memory, or a relationship...Share a moment in a meaningful and understanding way. That way, people will want to live it again and again!”

Brand Attraction

As a brand strategist, it's my job to clarify brand attractors. I have had the opportunity to lead many strategy sessions and workshops to discover and define the brand value that builds affinity with the audience. Whether for JPMorgan, Saudi Aramco, or Sodexo, we identify the intention and communicate it to the audience in their language and style. Unifying business goals, brand objectives, and the customer persona profile are key to creating compelling brand attraction. It may require observational audits, focus groups, and quantitative data to understand and affirm brand attractors that touch your audiences' wants and desires.

Discover your brand's moments of truth

Developing an effective brand requires a deep understanding of its core values. These values can be considered the “why” that compels and attracts your audience.

Discovering the correlation between a brand's core values and the intended audience drives authentic engagement, turning a consumer into a brand advocate. What do your customers love, and why do they love it? Where and when are the best times to touch your audiences? Understanding what drives your audience creates the foundation for meaningful interactions.

Brian Zaslow, President of Zaslow Marketing Group, states;

“A well-conceived brand strategy is the knowledge base that designers can use to make an intangible concept come alive.”

Establishing Your Brand Inside First

The best brands succeed before they ever step outside a board room. A valuable brand must first foster internal value, connecting with the members of your company or organization, creating genuine emotion around the office, thus allowing the brand to flourish in the public behind the authentic spirit of its creators. Is the voice of the brand authentic? Does your firm understand and embody the pillars of the brand? Does the business embed the tenets of the brand in a structural way? These are foundational questions that are paramount to a successful trajectory.

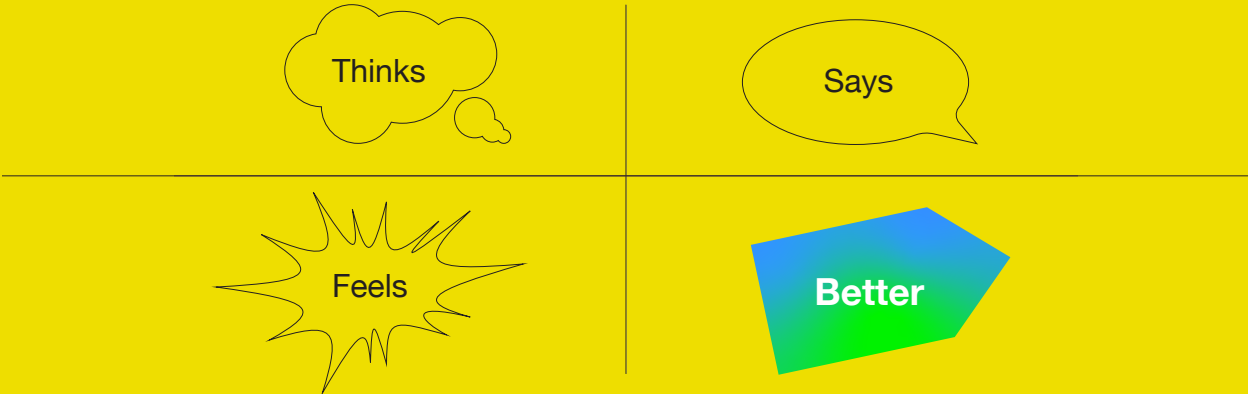
Karl Speak of Brand Tool Box states;

“Strategic thinking can be executed on two important platforms to support and build strong brands. The first serves the purpose of aligning and engaging an organization's culture to consistently deliver on the brand's promise. The second serves as a launching pad to ignite the power of design in a way that captures your audience's fascination.” A well-crafted brand strategy creates a powerful synergy between a brand and its audience by speaking directly to the intended audience in a compelling and relevant way.

Understanding the Personas of Your Audience

What is the ideal persona of your brand's intended audience? What kind of people are they? What do they think about? What do they feel, say, and do? What are the underlying passions and needs that are compelling them to engage with your brand? What do they like to talk about, and what do they spend time doing? By clearly defining the type of persona behind your audience, the more empathy, understanding, and stickiness your brand can cultivate. The chart below is an effective way to begin mapping out a persona.

People Brand Persona Map



Let's Listen

Building an authentic, engaging brand experience begins with listening to your audiences. Listening to the sentiment of your audience is a prerequisite for all meaningful engagement. The depth of audience engagement with your brand is dependent on the steps you take to listen to your audience. Therein lies the meaning in listening to people and understanding their needs and desires.

Creative Director at IBX, Marc Balara states;

“We need to really listen to people, so we can truly deliver on our brand promise that helps them believe, understand, and desire our products. We must see as the people see; we must understand what the people understand. Our passion, our mission is always to find the essence within our brands and really believe in it, expressing it wonderfully and smartly...so they believe it too.”

Validating Design

“Design clarifies, lifts, and enhances everything,”

says Don Lowry, managing director of LowryHill Global

Today's digital tools mitigate much of the ambiguity surrounding a brand's performance. Whether it's impressions, likes, or CPMs, data and thorough analysis can reveal design success from an empirical standpoint. While there is still no consensus on valuing brand equity in a completely concrete way, we do see evidence for a movement towards a world where the brand is an asset on the balance sheet.

Consider a design intention that is not a conversion at the end of a customer journey but rather one whose goal is growing an audience or validating consensus. Both of those goals do not have explicit values in a monetary sense but clearly have tremendous value and can be validated with data. We've moved far, far away from the brand as a one-way street. The channels that brands occupy today allow for the creation of new value that is still relatively difficult to monetize, and yet, the value is actionable and apparent. The medium where the majority of communications take place offers real-time feedback and validation, allowing a business to pivot much more accurately. This dynamic allows businesses to listen and empathize in a much deeper way.

Brands that pivot based on this wealth of feedback and insight become more nimble, compelling, and relevant. How effectively that insight is leveraged is a function of how embedded a brand is at a structural level in the business. Businesses that are brand-centric are positioned to turn amorphous sentiment into actionable insight. Nimble, relevant, and empathetic brands will win.

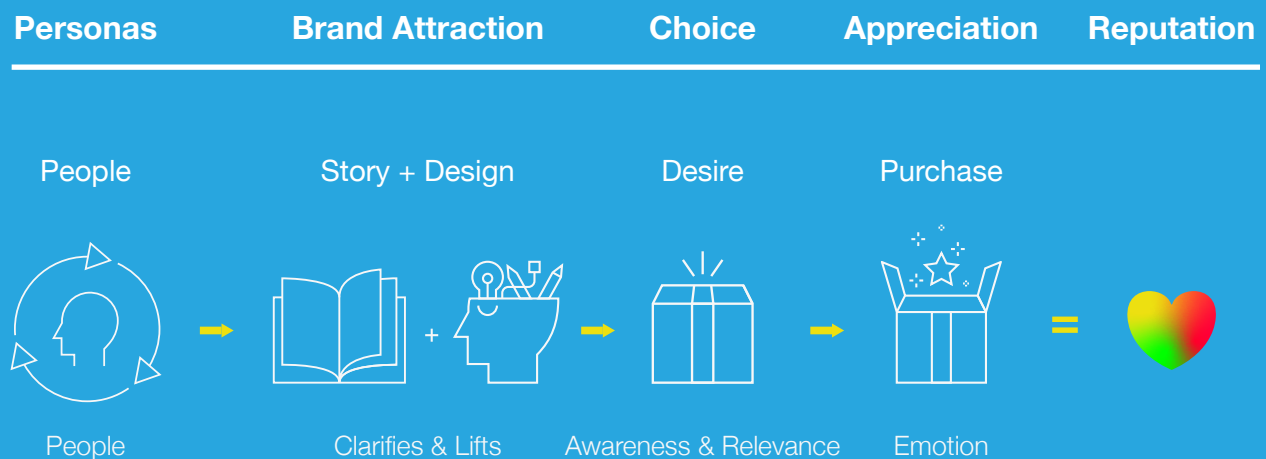
The Customer Journey

Christine Sheller, Director of Experience Design at O3 World, states;

“Everything is centered around understanding the customer journey—the points of brand impact and the opportunity on how we might create better experiences all along the way; Our customers are partners and fully embedded in all stages of the process. In aligning goals and outcomes and opportunities, we dive deep into the landscape so that we can occupy and see what the points of differentiation are and how your brand experience can be unique, distinct, and memorable.”

Understanding & Serving the Brand Journey

Attract with Emotion; Reputation is Built Over Reputation



Making it Human

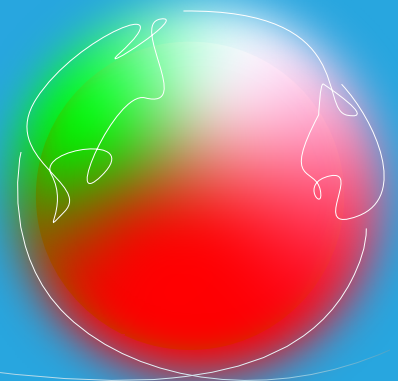
My design partner, **Romeu Machado**, *Design principal, Commcepta Design in Curitiba, Brazil* states that: **“We need to consider how Design can help in clarifying the strategic needs and objectives of the brand. Design thinking, design research with immersive discovery processes can unlock and bring to the surface the best of a brand’s potential and its most brilliant and shining strengths.”**

Winston Sordoni, *Design Director at Hanson Design.*

“Design is not a science and tends to move away from explicit answers, There are many solutions to a design problem. Analogy can be the driving force informing the design process. Is the meaning in the copy, the elements of design, the color, or shape? Meaning emerges in the space between these elements. The more we echo natural dynamics, the more human the work becomes.”

Smarter, beautiful, and expanding brands are better for people. More than ever, it is self-evident when a brand's success is created on well-conceived strategies and curated design that solicits a visceral response. High-performing brands are more than badges; they are symbols of complete thoughts and expressions of desire, memories that help attract, sustain, and evolve with their followers. They serve as a medium for communication between the audience and the company.

Design has moved away from being merely a tool of the marketers, strategists, and designers. A new wave of social awareness is introducing another level of understanding and empathizing with people that is now fundamental to a brand's success. Humans are so aware, sensitive, and smart. We get it quickly. We naturally discern what's better for us as individuals and as a collective. We like belonging to a group, a cause, and a company. Well-conceived brands can help us bond, relate, and make better choices for a better evolving world.





Contributors

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