

## Building Blocks for Building Your Brand Budget

Successful companies know that to build a brand budget they need a strategy, the resources to execute it and a way to measure success.

In order to clearly understand the funds needed to build a strong brand it's best to start with the end objective in mind, identify your market, profile your audience and know what your competition offers. Once you have this knowledge in hand you can then start to build your brand strategy.

The brand strategy is your road map to success and defines your company's course of action. It lays the foundation for building a strong brand and should include quantifiable objectives, strategies, tactics, and milestones that support that objective. Without a strategy you can expect long sales cycles, a weak pipeline, high customer turns, and to be engaged in activities that don't move you forward. Winning companies have a strong brand strategy that is well-developed and compelling. The strategy identifies why people should buy from you and how you are better and different from your competition. It will require you to understand your target audience, their problems and needs, and to purposefully position your offer to meet those needs—to be customer or market centric.

Many companies revise or redo their brand strategy over and over again failing to realize that the result of an inconsistent and ever changing strategy is a confused audience that is not able to understand why they should buy from you or how you are different from your competition. This in turn creates long or non-existent sales cycles and an even lower conversion rate. Winning companies do their homework up front and are confident in their strategy allowing them to invest brand dollars for the long term.

A strong strategy lays the foundation for success but without the resources to execute and fund it there's no reason to measure it or expect that there will be anything to measure.

Successful brands have a secure and approved budget that doesn't require going back to the money source for allocation of additional funds. Their plan is based on knowledge and a solid strategy that supports the investment required to execute the plan. A committed brand budget that is owned by the marketing department allows the marketers to function on a long-term basis rather than day to day. As a result a budget allows companies to focus on the big picture because funds are available and allocated to specific branding efforts.

Historically very few companies have had an approved brand budget. This is changing and today more and more companies are aware of the need to have specific funds allocated to the brand in order to assure a clear message that differentiates them from their competition and identifies how they are addressing the needs of their audience.

Additionally branding plans have been hampered by lean staff resources and a lack of outside experts to help guide the development of the brand. Many companies lead branding efforts with staff that are non-marketers—staff that have sales, finance or management backgrounds. The lack of internal and external brand support has kept many companies from being able to achieve their goals. Finding and utilizing the correct brand support is vital to the success of current and future branding.



Today more and more marketers are being asked to measure the success of their branding efforts yet very few actually know how to go about it. The lack of understanding is due in part to unclear business objectives, a poor strategy and little or no understanding of the current market. Without well thought out objectives, strategy and market knowledge it will be difficult for any company to build their brand let alone measure success. In the end, building a strong brand should result in greater market share, market awareness, market preference and brand equity. How you measure success will be based on the clarity of your objectives, strategy and market.

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