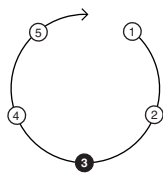


DISCIPLINE 3 : INNOVATE



## **WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD.**

A combination of good strategy and poor execution is like a Ferrari with flat tires. It looks good in the specs, but fails on the street. This is the case for at least half the brand communication done today. Don't take my word for it—pick up a copy of your favorite magazine and leaf through the ads. How many actually touch your emotions? Will you remember any of them tomorrow? If not, it's probably the fault of execution, not strategy. Execution—read creativity—is the most difficult part of the branding mix to control. It's magic, not logic, that ignites passion in customers.

Our cultural distrust in creativity goes back to the Enlightenment, when we discovered the awesome power of rational thinking. The movement became so successful that rational thinking became the only thinking—at least the only thinking you could trust. Yet in spite of our continuing reverence for rationality, we don't really do many things by logic. Our best thinking depends more on the “illogical” skills of intuition and insight, which may

explain why logical argument rarely convinces anyone of anything important.

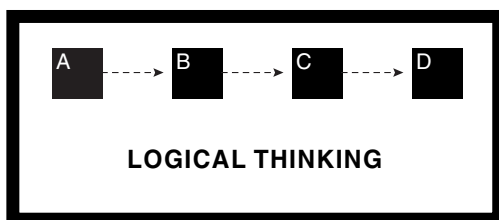
Benjamin Franklin, despite being a child of the Enlightenment, showed both intuition and insight when he observed: “Would you persuade, speak of interest, not of reason.”

Innovation requires creativity, and creativity gives many business people a twitch. Anything new, by definition, is untried, and therefore unsafe. Yet when you ask executives where they expect to find their most sustainable competitive advantage, what do they answer? Innovation. Because the truth is, innovation lies at the heart of both better design and better business. It magnifies drive inside the organization. It slashes the costs of inefficiency, duplication, and corporate ennui. It confers the ability to produce uncommon, yet practical, responses to real problems.



INNOVATION IS WHAT GIVES BRANDS  
TRACTION IN THE MARKETPLACE.

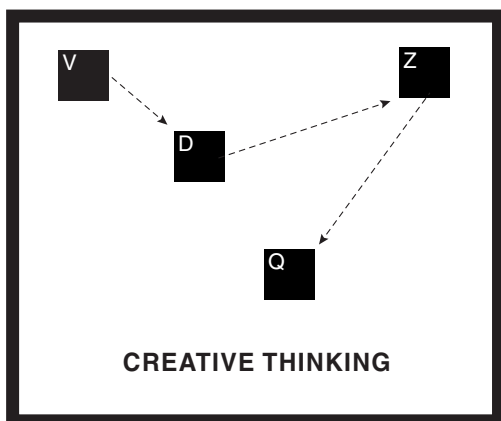




### **WHEN EVERYBODY ZIGS, ZAG.**

Would-be leaders in any industry must come to grips with a self-evident truth—you can't be a leader by following. Admittedly, it's difficult to zag when every bone in your body says zig. Human beings are social animals—our natural inclination is to go with the group.

Creativity, however, demands the opposite. It requires an unnatural act. To achieve originality we need to abandon the comforts of habit, reason, and the approval of our peers, and strike out in new directions. In the world of branding, creativity doesn't require reinventing the wheel, but simply thinking in fresh ways. It requires looking for what industrial designer Raymond Loewy called



MAYA—the Most Advanced Yet Acceptable solution. Creative professionals excel at MAYA. While market researchers describe how the world is, creative people describe how it could be. Their thinking is often so fresh that they zag even when they should zig. But without fresh thinking, there's no chance of magic.

An effective use of the MAYA principle was the career of The Beatles. They began in the early 1960s with songs that were commonly acceptable, then raised the bar of innovation one record at a time. By the end of the decade, they had taken their audience on a wild ride from the commonplace to the sublime, and in the process created the anthems for a cultural revolution. Their formula? As one critic observed: “They never did the same thing once.”

AUDIENCES WANT MORE THAN LOGIC.





## BRAND OR BLAND?

Q: How do you know when an idea is innovative?

A: When it scares the hell out of everybody.

A friend of mine once observed that the only thing worse than the fear of death is the “fear of stupid.” Some companies are so afraid of appearing less than dignified that they settle for proud, stiff, or inhuman. Against this backdrop of stuffed shirts, smart companies have an excellent chance to stand out—to zag. The Volkswagen Bug did it to great effect in the 1960s (and again in the 1990s) by using self-deprecating humor as a strategic weapon. But humor is only one way to surprise people. Mostly it just takes the guts to be different.



Of course, while audiences may reward guts, corporations usually don't. Japanese salarymen have a saying: "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down." Corporate America has a similar saying: "Don't rock the boat." No wonder people are afraid of signing off on new ideas—by keeping your head down you're more likely to keep it attached. Then where will innovation come from? Most likely from the outside, or from people inside who think outside.

THE NAIL THAT STICKS UP  
IS ONE BRAVE NAIL.



## **THOSE CRAZY NEW NAMES.**

Agilent, Agilis, Ajilon, and Agere. Advantix, Advantis, Adventis, and Advanta. Actuant, Equant, Guidant, and Reliant. Prodigy, Certegy, Centegy, and Tality. Why are there so many sound-alike names? The short answer is this: Most of the good names are taken. Between a rising tide of startups on one hand, and a flood of URLs on the other, companies are continually forced to dive deeper for workable names. The latest trend is to push the boundaries of dignity with names like Yahoo!, Google, FatSplash, and Jamcracker. Where will it end?

It won't. The need for good brand names originates with customers, and customers will always want convenient ways of identifying, remembering, discussing, and comparing brands. The right name can be a brand's most valuable asset, driving differentiation and speeding acceptance. The wrong name can cost millions, even billions, in workarounds and lost income over the lifetime of the brand. George Bernard Shaw's advice applies to brands as well as people: "Take care to get born well."

Of course, some names haven't been created so much as inherited. A good example of a heritage name is Smuckers, which marketing people have often cited as a bad name with a clever spin. "With a name like Smuckers, it has to be good," goes the well-known slogan. But Smuckers was a good name from day one—distinctive, short, spellable, pronounceable, likable, portable, and protectable. And while the company presents it as slightly silly, the name benefits strongly from onomatopoeia. "Smuckers" sounds like smacking lips, the pre-verbal testament to a yummy jam.



----- "WITH A NAME LIKE SMUCKERS,  
IT **BETTER** BE GOOD"  
—RED SKELTON



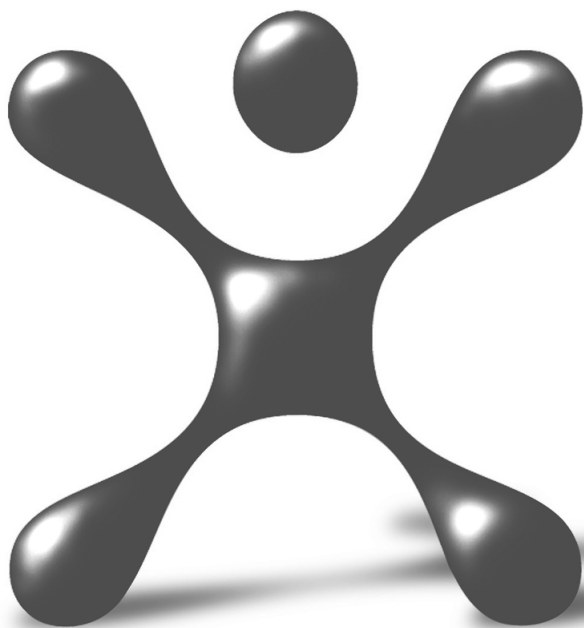
Another heritage name is Carl Zeiss, the maker of optical lenses. Does Zeiss make great lenses? Who knows? But the name makes the lenses “sound” great. The word “Zeiss” has hints of “glass” and “precise,” and evokes thoughts of German technological superiority. The name works so well that it can stretch to include high-end sunglasses and other precision products without the risk of breakage.

Generally speaking, high-imagery names are more memorable than low-imagery names. Names constructed from Greek and Latin root words tend to be low-imagery names. Accenture and Innoveda come to mind. Names that use Anglo-Saxon words, or the names of people, tend to be high-imagery names, producing vivid mental pictures that aid recall. Think of Apple Computer and Betty Crocker. Some of most powerful names are those that combine well with a visual treatment to create a memorable brand icon.

## **THE 7 CRITERIA FOR A GOOD NAME:**

- 1 **DISTINCTIVENESS.** Does it stand out from the crowd, especially from other names in its class? Does it separate well from ordinary text and speech? The best brand names have the “presence” of a proper noun.
- 2 **BREVITY.** Is it short enough to be easily recalled and used? Will it resist being reduced to a nickname? Long multi-word names will be quickly shortened to non-communicating initials.
- 3 **APPROPRIATENESS.** Is there a reasonable fit with the business purpose of the entity? If it would work just as well—or better—for another entity, keep looking.
- 4 **EASY SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION.** Will most people be able to spell the name after hearing it spoken? Will they be able to pronounce it after seeing it written? A name shouldn’t turn into a spelling test or make people feel ignorant.
- 5 **LIKABILITY.** Will people enjoy using it? Names that are intellectually stimulating, or provide a good “mouth feel,” have a headstart over those that don’t.
- 6 **EXTENDIBILITY.** Does it have “legs”? Does it suggest a visual interpretation or lend itself to a number of creative executions? Great names provide endless opportunities for brandplay.
- 7 **PROTECTABILITY.** Can it be trademarked? Is it available for web use? While many names can be trademarked, some names are more defensible than others, making them safer and more valuable in the long run.

AVATARS RUN CIRCLES  
AROUND LOGOS.



## ICONS AND AVATARS.

A brand icon is a name and visual symbol that communicate a market position. An avatar is an icon that can move, morph, or otherwise operate freely as the brand's alter ego. For icon, think Shell; for avatar, think Cingular. Icons can sometimes be upgraded to avatars, as AT&T has done by animating its striped globe icon in its TV spots.

Logos are dead! Long live icons and avatars! Why? Because logos as we know them—logo-types, monograms, abstract symbols, and other two-dimensional trademarks—are products of the printing press and mass communication. They evolved as a way to identify brands rather than to differentiate them. Today marketers realize that branding is not about stamping a trademark on anything that moves. It's about managing relationships between the company and its constituents, conducting a conversation among many people over many channels. We still have the printing press at our beck and call, but we also have the Internet, TV, telemarketing, live events, and other media to work with. Icons and avatars respond to this new reality by jumping off the printed page and interacting with people wherever they are.

Aristotle was a born brander. He believed that “perception starts with the eye,” and that “the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor.”

These two principles create the basis of brand icons. Cognitive scientists estimate that more than half the brain is dedicated to the visual system, adding weight to the argument that a trademark should be strongly visual. Yet it can also involve other senses, including smell, touch, taste, or hearing. Take for example, the auditory counterpart to an icon, sometimes called an “earcon.” The experience of flying United Airlines is now inextricably linked to Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue,” and the Intel Inside brand would be less memorable without its “bong” sound bite.

When conceived well, an icon is a repository of meaning. It contains the DNA of the brand, the basic material for creating a total personality distinct



from the competition. The meanings that are packed into the icon can be unpacked at will and woven into all the brand communications, from advertising to signage, from web pages to trade show booths, from packaging to the products themselves. An avatar goes even further by becoming the symbolic actor in a continuing brand story. As trademarks go from two dimensions to three and four dimensions, the old-style logo may begin to seem more like a tintype than a motion picture.



## IT'S ALL PACKAGING.

While not all brands are products and not all products are sold at retail, a book on brand would be remiss to ignore the importance of packaging. For many products, the package is the branding. It's also the last and best chance to influence a prospect this side of the checkout counter.

In some retail environments, such as the supermarket, it's possible for a package to reach 100% of people shopping in that category. For several seconds, or even a few precious minutes, the shopper is completely focused on the differences among brands. Previous intentions to buy one product over another are suddenly put aside and memories of past advertising are shoved into the background as the competing packages go “mano a mano” for the shopper's attention. This is known as a branding moment.

Retail brand managers funnel a large portion of their marketing budgets into package design, because the return on investment is likely to be higher with packaging than with advertising,

promotion, public relations, or other spending options. For many retail products, packaging not only makes the final sale, it strikes a significant blow for the brand, since experience with the product is often the best foundation for customer loyalty.

Marketers know this, but they're not sure what makes it work. How, exactly, does one package beat another at the point of sale? How much of the battle is won by logic and how much by magic? Is it science or art? As you might guess, it's both. But since most marketers favor left-brain thinking, most packages end up heavy on facts and light on emotion, the ingredient customers want most. Instead, customers are greeted with features, benefits, and what one shopper I interviewed called "scientific mumbo jumbo."

Before you can create emotion with a package, however, you need to understand the natural reading sequence of your category. It so happens that customers process messages in a certain order, depending on the product, and messages presented out of order go unheeded.

Here's an example of a typical reading sequence:

- 1) the shopper notices the package on the shelf—the result of good colors, strong contrast, an arresting





A RETAIL PACKAGE IS THE LAST AND BEST CHANCE TO MAKE A SALE.



photo, bold typography, or other technique; 2) the shopper mentally asks “What is it?,” bringing the product name and category into play; 3) then “Why should I care?,” which is best answered with a very brief why-to-buy message; 4) which in turn elicits a desire for more information to define and support the why-to-buy message; 5) the shopper is finally ready for the “mumbo-jumbo” necessary to make a decision—features, price, compatibilities, guarantees, awards, or whatever the category dictates.

When you present these pieces of information in a natural reading sequence, you increase their resonance and create a sympathetic bond with the customer. But if you lead off with features when the customer simply wants to know why she should care, the message that may come through is this: “Our product’s features are more important than your interests.” Advertising pioneer David Ogilvy often claimed that by changing a single word in a headline one could increase effectiveness of an

advertisement by up to ten times. In my own practice, I've proven (at least to myself) that by getting the reading sequence right, and by connecting product features to customer emotions, a package can increase product sales by up to three times, sometimes more.

But what if you don't sell at retail? No matter. The principles used in successful packaging—clarity, emotion, and a natural reading sequence—apply to every type of brand design. When you think about it, branding is simply a convenient package for a business idea.



## DOES OUR WEBSITE LOOK FAT IN THIS DRESS?

The award for Most Egregious Disregard of Natural Reading Sequence goes to...that's right, the World Wide Web. Arguably the most promising medium of our time, the web took off like a rocket, but failed to escape the dense atmosphere of its own hype. That's because the web, while a technical achievement, has been a usability nightmare. It began as the brainchild of a colony of feature-loving geeks, who fed it capability after capability until it became a hydra-head of non-information.

Most of today's home pages ignore the basic

WHICH SITE LOOKS

**Netscape: My Excite**

Looking to make a love connection?

powered by **EMC<sup>2</sup>**

Personalize: [Page Settings](#) • [Content](#) • [Layout](#) • [Colors](#) • [Sign In](#)    [Like](#) • [Email](#) • [Ecard](#)

**Excite Precision Search**

☒ Web ☐ Directory ☐ Metasearch ☐ Photos

Popular Searches: [Flowers](#) [Insurance](#) [DSL](#) [Diamonds](#)

[Yellow Pages](#) [Write Pages](#) [Classifieds](#)

**New on Excite - Super Tracker!**

**Explore Excite**

[Shop](#) [Cash Back](#) [Save Builder](#) [Auctions](#) [Classifieds](#)...  
[Connect Chat](#) [People Finder](#) [Personals](#)...  
[Tools](#) [Small Business](#) [Yellow Pages](#) [Jobs](#) [Site Map](#)...

Symbol	Price	Change
W	10,368.86	+262.73
DAQ	1,802.75	+71.26
500	1,131.78	+25.05

Get Quotes:

[Market Screener](#) • [Find Symbol](#)

Last update: Markets Closed  
Data delayed at least 20 minutes

**horoscope**

Get your daily forecast!  
Enter Your Birthday  
(MM DD YYYY)

**My News**

Official: Taliban Urging Holy War  
GARDEZ, Afghanistan (AP) -  
Al-Qaida and Taliban fighters are regrouping in the mountains of eastern Pakia province and just over the border in...

**Today on Excite** 3/1

[News](#) [Reuters](#) | [AP](#) | [Video](#)

[Poll: Is It Stealing?](#)

[Tip New Job Listings](#)

- [Latest Real Estate News](#)
- [Help Others Search Better](#)
- [Screen the Stock Market](#)

[Nintendo GameCube](#)

**excite computers**

**Weather**

Enter your City or ZIP Code:

rules of visual aesthetics, including contrast, legibility, pacing, and reading sequence. Uncultivated websites shove a tangle of unruly data in your face, then expect you to sort it out: a typical home page tries to squeeze an average of 25 pieces of information, some of it animated, into an area the size of a handkerchief. The closest relative of today's web page is a newspaper page, yet most home pages make newspaper pages seem easy to navigate. The concept of a natural reading sequence has yet to reach the bastion of bad taste we fondly call the web.

EASIER TO USE?



Okay, let's be fair. The designers of newspapers, books, movies, and television have had more time to refine their aesthetic "best practices." Television shows were pretty hokey until the networks became big business and competition forced the issue. But what exactly are the invisible chains keeping web design from achieving its full potential? It boils down to three: technophobia, turfismo, and featuritis.

**TECHNOPHOBIA**, the fear of new technology, keeps a lot of skilled designers out of web design. They're mostly afraid the technical demands of the medium will engulf their projects, leaving little time to work on the aesthetics. The result is that most web design, thus deprived of disciplined designers, still falls below the aesthetic level considered standard for catalogs, annual reports, and books.

**TURFISMO**, the second problem, is the behind-the-screen politicking that transforms the home page into a patchwork of tiny fiefdoms. You can see exactly which departments have the power and which don't, as turfy managers fight for space on the company marquee. Simplify the home page? Sure, but not at my expense!

Finally, **FEATURITIS**, an infectious desire for **MORE**, afflicts everyone from the CEO to the pro-

grammer. The tendency to add features, articles, graphics, animations, links, buttons, bells, and whistles comes naturally to most people. The ability to subtract features is the rare gift of the true communicator. An oft-heard excuse for cluttered pages is that most people hate clicking, and prefer to see all their choices on one page. The truth is, most people LIKE clicking—they just hate waiting. Eternal waiting, along with confusion and clutter, are the real enemies of communication. Put your website on a diet. You'll find that subtraction, not addition, is the formula for clear communication.

All brand innovation, whether for a website, a package, a product, an event, or an ad campaign, should be aimed at creating a positive experience for the user. The trick is in knowing which experience will be the MOST positive—even before you commit to it.