

Continuous

Branding

**For Service-Based Organisations
Ambitious to Grow**

Craig Thatcher

CHAPTER 6

**A Strategic Tool
for Growth**

The flow of the world economy influences everything, whilst the arrival of new technologies and changes in legislation cause more obvious buffeting.

In the UK, the self employed and entrepreneurial start-ups proliferate and they are targeting ever smaller market segments. This means that most markets with low barriers to entry are being turned upside down and shift relentlessly.

Against this backdrop, it's vital to keep growing because a growing organisation is dynamic, forward looking and creates more opportunities for everyone – a far better place for you and your people, your clients, as well as your suppliers and shareholders.

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Printed in the United Kingdom and published simultaneously in electronic format.

First edition, 2015

ISBN: 978-0-9932168-1-7

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

It upsets me when I see brand owners of service-based organisations wasting their time, effort and money when I know they're ambitious for growth and they're still not achieving it. They don't recognise that a different way of doing things could make a big difference to how consistently they might grow in the future.

Having helped many of my clients over the years to understand the power of branding and how to use it better, I wanted to find a way of reaching out to more people so they could achieve greater performance and success by growing more easily and more consistently. In this chapter, I show why the best service-based organisations grow so consistently whilst others don't and what they're actually doing to achieve it. Successful ones already recognise that branding and design are essential components for growth and innovation regardless of their size. Yet service is still under valued as a key differentiator by many. Receiving excellent service makes people feel fantastic and creates the most memorable of experiences. Of course, the reverse is also true.

Over the last few years, I've asked searching questions of my clients of all sizes from start-ups to multinationals, then looked for common patterns in their responses, their thinking, behaviour and communication that I could attribute to only the most successful. I've had to look deep because the differences between the best and the rest are often small, just like in the world of sport where the margins between winners and losers are slim.

I've reviewed independently commissioned research papers and reference materials by trade associations on service performance, design and branding to establish whether the patterns I observed in my most successful clients were mirrored elsewhere.

I found that all the most successful organisations grow consistently and sustainably because they join all the important elements neatly together. They also appreciate that providing excellent service is an ideal way to differentiate their brands from their competitors.

Then I set myself a challenge – to find an easy way to explain it all that would make a real difference. At a basic level this had to be by linking an organisation's strategy to its clients, to its leader and its people as well as its suppliers. In a simple and straightforward way that everyone could understand and support. At the next level it needed some form of 'glue' that would reinforce the links, making them rigid and stronger together. It seemed especially important for the leaders and senior management to 'get it and use it' because they set a company's whole tone and culture. It had to be practical and accountable and definitely could not include 'management speak' or 'marketing gobbledegook'.

I wanted to share this in a form that you could adapt and use for your own advantage. The reason you have to be able to modify it for yourself, rather than take it without changing anything is because you may be in a business-to-consumer market, a business-to-business one or have to operate in both at the same time and so face different issues. I know it's popular to say there's no difference between B2B and B2C because it's all P2P (people-to-people), but we all know that's not entirely true.

The other reason is that I've never come across two service-based organisations needing the same advice and guidance at precisely the same time. Each is unique, despite any superficial similarities. That's why the whole area of service branding is so challenging, so exciting and also so rewarding. The final reason is that whilst it's easier to identify what needs to change from the outside, for change to last it has to grow from the inside.

I want to encourage you to look at your own particular situation from a new perspective and then to think differently. Then introduce changes that make a difference over the long term. I'm not suggesting that you must fundamentally change everything you do. Nor is this about costing you a fortune or demanding that you hire expensive people whose skills set you don't

understand. So given everything so far, this led me to develop the strategic tool of 'Continuous Branding' with five principles that I'll share with you in the next chapter.

But first a word of warning. Don't expect Continuous Branding to paper over fundamental problems. It won't make up for fuzzy goals, poor leadership, an uncompetitive, inconsistent or over priced service, a weak structure or demoralised people.

Key points in this chapter

- Successful organisations recognise that branding and design are essential components for growth and innovation regardless of their size. Service still tends to be under valued as a key differentiator by many organisations.
- My most successful clients share a common pattern in terms of their thinking, behaviour and communication that helps explain why the best of them grow consistently whilst others do not. This is mirrored in successful world-class organisations.
- I wanted to develop an easy way to explain how service brands grow by linking an organisation's strategy to its clients, its leader and its people as well as its suppliers – in a way that everyone can understand and support.
- My aim is to share this in a form that you can adapt for your own advantage, first by thinking differently and then looking at your specific circumstances from a new perspective. Then introduce changes that make a fundamental difference over the long term.



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