

Step Two

Module One

Mini Lesson Guide

the
marketing
Democracy™

Welcome!



Products and services are easy to duplicate. And, if you focus your marketing solely on your products and services, you will likely find yourself in a shouting match with your competitors. Brands create a competitive advantage--they elevate products above all the noise to create a special place in the heads, the hearts, and the wallets of customers. Unfortunately, brands tend to be the domain of large companies and many SMBs are left behind. We're here to fix that. This module will illustrate how brands build business. Brand-building is time, effort, and money well-spent.

- Judy

Module Overview

In this module, we are going to focus on four key ideas:

- In [Lesson One](#), you will learn that a brand is more than a tagline and a logo. You will learn what it truly means to be a brand.
- In [Lesson Two](#), you will learn that brands are more than a marketing short-cut. They actually add financial value to your bottom line.
- In [Lesson Three](#), you will learn how to close the gap between the "haves" (companies with brands) and the "have nots" (companies without brands).
- In [Lesson Four](#), you will learn the benefits and risks of putting your name on the door.

To help you move from focusing on your products and services to promoting your brand, you can purchase a "Brand Ladder Template." This downloadable PDF is fully functional if you open it in Adobe Acrobat Reader. Be sure to click on the "listen" icon in the lower right-hand corner to learn more about this helpful tool. And, for additional inspiration, you can watch the real-world example video to see this lesson in practice.

Congratulations on taking this important step in your journey to developing world-class marketing for your business.



Lesson One

What is a Brand?

Why This Matters

A brand is the most valuable yet misunderstood asset that any business can have. Large companies who understand marketing have transformed the most mundane products and services into some of the world's most iconic brands. But what about everyone else? Brands are so much more than a logo and an accompanying tagline. Yet many businesses don't know how to move beyond the basics to unlock the true potential of their brands. We're going to fix that. In order to do so, we first need to address what a brand is and why they are so important. That's what this lesson is all about.

5 Key Takeaways

- Being the very best at what you do is the price of entry into the battle for the hearts, minds, and wallets of customers. Being the best is job one—it doesn't mean, "job done."
- When businesses focus their marketing on functional attributes, they will likely find themselves in a "no-win" competitive battle. Someone can always "out-shout" and/or "out claim" you.
- The greatest divide between large companies and all other businesses isn't resources, it's brands. Large companies understand the value of brands they invest in building and maintaining enduring brands.
- A logo and catchy tagline do not make a brand. Brands are so much more—they represent everything that you say and do.
- Brands are promises that live in the hearts and minds of customers. They are based in storytelling that celebrate their role in customers' lives.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to Lesson Two, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

If you had to place your current marketing approach along a continuum from product features and price promotions at one end to brand stories at the other, where would you fall?

How would you describe and define a brand to others? How has this reflection exercise changed your pov?

What role do you currently play in the memories and life stories of your customers? Do you know where you fit?

Lesson Two

Brands Add Money to the Bottom-Line

Why This Matters

Why do so many publicly traded companies invest in brand-building? They know that brands are good for business. Brands create both short-term and long-term value in the marketplace. However, they require both time and money to build and maintain. While this is time and money well-spent, businesses tend to avoid expenses that are not directly tied to product sales. And to complicate matters, brand-building shows up as an expense on the company's financial statements. Don't let this deter you from investing in one of the most important assets that you have. This lesson is going to help make the case for why brands make good financial sense.

Key Takeaways

- Brands add money to your bottom line. When you evaluate two identical businesses with the same products and services, the business with the stronger brand will win every time.
- Branding enables you to charge a premium for certain products and services that are similar in kind and quality to other alternatives in the marketplace.
- A strong brand makes it easier for businesses to branch out into new markets. It's akin to entering a race with a head-start over your competitors.
- Brand value is difficult to express on your financial statements since it's an intangible asset. Don't let this deter you from investing in its growth.
- If/when you ever decide to sell your business, the monetary value of your brand will factor into the overall value of your business.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to Lesson Three, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

What is the price range for products and services in your category? Where do you fall within this range? How does your brand help you to compete on price?

What are you known for and how can you expand your product and service offerings based upon this?

What methods do you use to measure the financial value of your brand? Said another way, do you know how much money you make as a result of having a strong brand?

Lesson Three

The Branding Divide: Closing the Gap

Why This Matters

Not enough businesses have access to the training and the tools to build their brands. We're here to change that. But, we can't do it without your commitment. Companies that have built and nurtured some of the world's most iconic brands know that brand building requires an ongoing commitment. We'll do our part so that you can do yours. If you make the commitment, you will discover that you have all it takes to build your brand. Branding requires a deep knowledge of your customers and your business. You already have both. All you need are the right insights and tools to overcome the branding divide.

Key Takeaways

- Perhaps the greatest divide between large companies and all other businesses boils down to brands. Large companies have portfolios filled with brands while most businesses have not developed their brand.
- Ironically, businesses who currently do not have a brand likely have more inherent qualities that make them suited for brands. They just need to harness that potential.
- In order to build a brand, you need access to the right tools. We are democratizing access so that any business can build their brand.
- Large companies invest time, talent, and resources into Brand Management. All businesses of any size need to make the commitment as well.
- Large companies realize that brands are bigger than any person at the helm. Brands transcend leadership cycles and should prevail beyond any single vision.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to Lesson Four, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of this lesson?

What are the qualities of your business that make you special?
How can these qualities help to define your brand?

Do you have the proper time and bandwidth to work on brand building and brand management? What resources do you need to put in place to get the work done?

Is your brand vision stuck in your head? Or, do all stakeholders share the same vision?

Lesson Four

The Journey from Products to Brands

Why This Matters

How do you evolve your current marketing approach from its focus on products and services to a focus on your brand? Do your products and services even belong in your marketing communications at all? This final lesson will help you to evolve your marketing communications from the functional aspects of your products and services to the more enduring connections and values that your customers will remember. World-class marketers use Brand Ladders to travel from Point A (products and services) to Point B (brands and relationships). Now, you can too! We're here to explain this valuable tool so that you can climb the brand ladder and reap all its benefits.

Key Takeaways

- Products and services take up very little space in the customer's mind. In order to get noticed you need to either raise the stakes (create tension) or become more important (create involvement).
- Brand ladders help you climb the ladder of importance in your customers' lives by moving from functional aspects of your products and services to the emotional connections created by your brand promise.
- You can't climb the brand ladder if your product or service doesn't meet lower-level functional requirements. You need to climb each step of the ladder in sequence.
- As you climb each level of the ladder, you will be able to build deeper relationships with your customers. The higher you can go, the more important you will become.
- The brand ladder doesn't mean that you no longer market your products and services. Instead, it integrates them and elevates them into a more important and meaningful space.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to the action plan, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

How important is your product and/or service category to your customers? From a range of “low-involvement” on one end to “high-involvement” at the other, where do you fall?

What level of the Brand Ladder best represents your current marketing strategy?.

Can you apply the Brand Ladder to some of your favorite marketing communications? Are you able to recognize each step in the ladder?