



Understanding (and getting the most from) your company's Brandscapes

Understanding (and getting the most from) your company's Brandscape

Whether a company is a few days old or a hundred years, creating an easy-to-digest brand strategy is imperative for both, connecting internal teams and engaging audiences. There is no hard and fast rule for how a strategy platform should be created, however, it's important to understand and embrace this one truth: people don't have the mental capacity for long-form explanations of a brand.

This statement is as true for consumers as it is for internal marketing teams. While there is a place for in-depth brand guidelines, every brand should create a one-page Brandscape that can be used as a gut check for everything from external marketing to human resources, customer ambassador programs to company-wide meetings. Simply put, when someone asks, "Is this on brand?" the Brandscape should answer that question clearly and quickly.

There are a few ways to approach creating a Brandscape for your company, however, it could be easier to use if you consider splitting it into two components. The left third of the page focuses on more marketing-related brand elements and the right two-thirds defining the core inner workings of the company. Combined into a single sheet of paper, anyone within your company should be able to step back and see a bigger picture view of who you are, what you stand for, and why you're needed in the marketplace. For employees specifically, they should gain a better sense of the culture and beliefs driving how the company behaves and makes decisions. Just as a strategically written Brandscape can influence marketing materials; it can also support efforts in hiring, onboarding, and establishing a strong culture.

The first portion of the following pages will take a closer look at the left side, or what could be considered the marketing-centric portion of the Brandscape:

Target Audiences

Kid tested. Mother approved. Geared towards mothers that are conscious of their child's diet, but still want to purchase cereal that their child will enjoy.

– Kix

The success of a brand can be determined by what people are saying about that company. More specifically, what their core audience is saying about them when they're not in the room. Gone are the days of organizations preaching about how great they are. Today's consumers are much more engaged and vocal about what they demand from the companies they choose to buy from.

With this in mind, one could argue there has never been a time when understanding your audience has been this important. Whether you create customer ambassador teams, focus groups, surveys, or a number of other engagement tools, it's imperative to know who you should be talking to. Daake's rebranding process often includes interviews with customers, both current and past, if possible. This allows us to understand why they chose to buy from or partner with your company. It also helps shape a clearer picture of why a company might lose customers. Customer loyalty doesn't carry the weight it once did, which makes the behaviors and follow through of a company much more important. Consumers care more about purpose than they ever have, and their access to your company is at levels never seen before. Knowing who they are and what they care about is critical to branding.

Checklist

- List Primary Audience(s).

- List Secondary Audiences (if applicable).

- What need does your company meet.

- How should they feel when engaging with your brand? (adjectives)

Competitive Advantages

We do it in small ways, answering needs related to life at home by creating well designed furnishing products that are attractive, functional, sustainable and affordable.

– Ikea

Each element of the Brandscape is connected, either building off one another or by narrowing focus. The competitive advantages of a company should be identified as you work through each target audience. In particular, how needs are met, or problems are solved. These answer “why would this audience choose our company over someone else?” While the list of competitive advantages will generally not be an onlyness to your company, they will begin to illustrate what makes your company stand out in a crowded marketplace. This list often ranges from 3–5 points. Any more than that and it may be necessary to go through the list again to make sure each point is true and meaningful.

During the rebranding process, these points are often created from surveys and interviews with customers. Words and phrases that point to why this company was selected are considered, as well as how unique it is against the competition.

Checklist

- List what you have heard or read from customers pointing to their “why.”

- List what makes you different from competitors, but only those things that matter to customers.

- Identify why your company does in a more compelling or different way than anyone else.

Positioning

Harley Davidson

What: The only motorcycle manufacturer

How: that makes big, loud motorcycles

Who: for macho guys and macho wannabes

Where: mostly in the USA

Why: who want to join a gang of cowboys

When: in an era of decreasing personal freedom.

Without a doubt writing a real, meaningful positioning statement can be the most time-intensive element of a Brandscape. It brings together a summarized myriad of elements from within the brand strategy and puts a focus on what makes a company unique. If only one piece of a Brandscape could be used by internal marketing teams, this would be recommended.

A well-written positioning statement in this form provides strategic thinking combined with descriptive language to help bring its essence to life. It embodies the brand in a way that should inspire internal teams and clarify how audiences should be spoken with.

This exercise should focus on the company as it stands today or based on the shift that's taking place. For acquisition-driven rebrands, it's necessary to create this statement based on the change that will occur following the transition. However, the information written for each area should be true and supported by data.

Below describes Daake's approach to long form positioning:

What: The category you occupy in the mind of the consumer.

How: Your one-of-a-kind way

Who: Colorfully describe your primary customer.

Where: Where do you work?

Why: Why do customers choose you?

When: What forces are you fighting against?

Competition

Online one-stop-shops that can offer lower prices due to less overhead costs.
– Barnes & Noble

Every rebrand includes a competitive analysis. The depth of the analysis varies by the needs and goals of the project and can range from higher-level benchmarking to a more thorough evaluation of a company's competitors. While it's important to take time to identify those you're competing against in the eyes of your audience, our strategy includes positioning, brand aesthetic, and more.

First, it's important to understand how the competition positions itself in the market. A simple search online can tell you a lot about each of your competitors. First, look at the company's metadata. Often this area includes their positioning or a strong statement about who they are and what they do. If it doesn't, the next place to look is the company's homepage. By skimming the page, you should get a clear understanding of their positioning and even key focus areas. Take notes and consider how you can or do already differentiate your business from theirs.

The number of competitors to include within your Brandscape should reflect who you are most concerned with, specifically those taking market share and any others that pose a possible threat to your success. It might also be necessary to break them up into Primary Competitors and Secondary Competitors. The purpose of the exercise is to include who they are and their positioning in the Brandscape so that any member of your team, marketing firm or public relations partner can scan and clearly understand how they differ from you. Beyond brand expression, this area should focus on positioning and any key strategy elements that should be known.

Checklist

Positioning statement:

Primary brand aesthetic (colors, graphics, photography style):

Unique claim:

Onlyness

TOMS is the only shoe company that donates one pair of shoes for every pair it sells.

Is there one thing your company does that either no one else does or that it does significantly better than anyone else?

This is often the most challenging element of a Brandscape. It's also one of the most important. However, once a long form positioning statement is created, editing this down into an onlyness is much easier. The "What" refers to the category a business exists within and the "How" of a brand's positioning should reflect its unique offering or core differentiator. The final element of an onlyness statement is the benefit. This should always address a specific need of the customer.

In rebranding it's not uncommon for companies to say they don't have an onlyness. On the surface, this can seem true in some circumstances but more than likely it just needs to be discovered. A thorough rebranding can uncover the hidden qualities of a company that can support a significant shift in its future. It can also help your team become more aspirational in its direction and use this time to double down on what you really want to achieve.

In its simplest form, an onlyness statement uses the following formula:

Our (offering) is the only (category) that (benefit).

It's necessary to be very brief and clear about each element of the statement. Using too many words or making it too colorful can make it harder to understand and harder to double down on. This element of a Brandscape should be done later in the process as competition, positioning, mission, vision, and purpose should all be understood and considered in the creation of an onlyness statement.

(COMPANY) _____ is the only _____ (CATEGORY)

that _____ (UNIQUE OFFERING) that _____ (BENEFIT) _____.

Shifting gears

Shifting gears, the remaining two-thirds of the Brandscape focus on the internal, foundational elements of a company, which directly drive the brand. The following elements should be true and clear for both internal and external audiences; many of which having a longer shelf life to help guide the company toward its goals:

Purpose

**Empowering people to
stay a step ahead in life
and in business.**

- ING

Beyond making money, why does this company exist? Identifying the purpose of a company can be intimidating. Purpose essentially ignores the tangible elements of an organization and focuses on its heartbeat. It is the driving force behind how a company operates, who it hires and partners with, and it should never change.

As an example, Coca-Cola's purpose is: To refresh the world. They could stop producing soda tomorrow to make personal fans and the purpose would remain intact. In as few words as possible, describe why your company exists.

Checklist

- Truthfully and simply answer: Beyond economics, why does this company exist?

- Another way to approach it: If your company was wiped off the planet today, what would the world be missing?

- Take another look—is this speaking to the greater good and can it be edited even further?

Vision

A world without Alzheimer's disease. - Alzheimer's Association

In thinking about vision and mission, it's necessary for companies to envision them side-by-side. Both have a shelf life of five to 20 years, and both depend on the other to be true. The Vision of a company can be defined as the shared picture of mission success. As long as the company is living by its mission, it should be in a position to achieve its vision.

Another way to approach vision is by approaching it as the "what" of your strategic plan. What does success look like in the future—in a tangible way? This can include having a presence in every state, offices on all seven continents, 5,000 employees, or a wide range of other tangible and measurable qualities. It can be incredibly challenging for a company to put a stake in the ground in this realm of thinking because their potential success (or failure) becomes very, very real. However, if the vision uses language or an end point that cannot be measured, leadership runs the risk of uncertainty and confusion about the direction of the company among employees and partners. Think big but in a realistic way.

In considering the items in the checklist, remember these need to be tangible in nature.

Checklist

- Identify where you see the company in five years.

- Do the same with a 10-year vision in mind.

- Make notes on what the company needs to do to reach both.

Mission

Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world. If you have a body, you are an athlete.
– Nike

A company's mission is really a summary of the master plan for creating value. This statement should be no more than a sentence and explain "how" the company will work its way to accomplish its vision. This should be action-oriented and lean into what success might look like. In creating a mission, consider the inner workings of the company as well as what you're trying to do for customers. If ever used in an externally facing touch point, the mission should give consumers confidence the company is on a path that supports their wants and needs.

Checklist

- Briefly describe how you are working toward your company's vision.

- Edit and improve word choice to make this as succinct and as meaningful as possible.

Core Values

Taking care of our people.

Giving back to our communities.

Doing the right thing.

Excellent customer service.

Creating shareholder value.

Building strong relationships.

Entrepreneurial spirit.

Respect for all people.

- Home Depot

The core values of a company should reflect and support its purpose and culture. Within the Brandscape, core values should be written in the identified tone and voice of the brand. Avoid using language that could be considered corporate sunshine; the values should be simple, believable, and demonstrated by the rewarded behaviors within the organization.

As an example, rather than stating "integrity" as a core value, companies need to think about what that really means. Is it being honest and authentic enough to admit mistakes? Or is this word being used to describe an expected level of professionalism? If leadership is uncertain about what its values truly mean, no doubt employees feel even more confused.

This is also another area departments such as Human Resources tap into for shaping interview questions, creating rewards programs, as well as supporting team meetings and other internal touch points.

Checklist

- List your company's existing values and ask if they're actually relevant to how the company operates.
- Are there values currently not included that could more accurately describe the behaviors of the company?
- After identifying 3-5 core values, describe what each actually means to you, to your employees, partners, and customers. Highlight words and phrases that you feel would resonate most with each.
- Simplify each core value to clarify its meaning.

Brand Personality/ Voice

Fun but not silly

Confident but not cocky

Smart but not stodgy

Informal but not sloppy

Helpful but not overbearing

Expert but not bossy

Weird but not inappropriate

- MailChimp

Each brand has human-like qualities, including personality and tone of voice. By taking time to describe these elements, it can be easier for internal teams to create materials that align with the brand. Adjectives are often used heavily in this area and may include friendly, optimistic, direct, etc. Within three or four sentences the feel of what your brand sounds like should give greater confidence to anyone responsible for expressing it.

Daake utilizes archetypes to help companies understand who they are and what human characteristics they possess. Every story includes characters the human psyche has come to know and understand, the same could be said for brands. For example, we understand the Lover values a sense of connection and deep appreciation whereas the Hero leans into action and has strong determination. Just in reading about their values, you can begin to picture what these two archetypes sound like. One has a softer, warmer tone while the other tends to lead sentences with verbs.

Consumers inherently understand the qualities and behaviors of archetypes, which is why they can be so powerful in branding. The language and feel of a brand's archetype is often used in the Brand Personality/Voice space of the Brandscape as it creates a clear, easy to understand vision for how the brand should sound across all communications.

Checklist

- Describe the brand as though it were human and edit this down into 3-4 sentences.
- Create a list of adjectives to describe the brand's tone.
- Consider pursuing a brand archetype discovery to give greater clarity into the behaviors and natural tendencies of the brand.

Big Idea

I'm lovin' it.
– McDonald's

Creating a well-thought, honest Brandscape is challenging yet brings an incredible amount of clarity once completed. At the center of this strategic summary is the Big Idea. Rather than thinking of this as a tagline or positioning, the Big Idea should be viewed as a snappy summary of the brand. For some companies this leans toward brand promise. For others, it becomes an internal rally cry to keep employees focused and clear about the brand.

There's a reason the Big Idea is introduced last. It should take into consideration every other component and serve as the exclamation point for the brand.

Checklist

- Take a step back and absorb each component of the Brandscape.
- Summarize the brand in as few words as possible.
- Review the onliness statement and consider how this might be presented in a snappy, creative way.

Crafting Your Strategic Brandscape

Thoughtfully complete each area to create a clear and concise brand strategy that will guide your decisions and behaviors as a company.

THE _____ BRANDSCAPE

<p>TARGET AUDIENCE(S)</p>	<p>PURPOSE</p>	<p>MISSION</p>	
<p>COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>THE BIG IDEA</p> </div>		<p>VISION</p>
<p>POSITIONING</p>	<p>ONLY STATEMENT</p> <p>_____(COMPANY)_____ IS THE ONLY _____(CATEGORY)_____</p> <p>THAT _____(UNIQUE OFFERING)_____ THAT _____(BENEFIT)_____.</p>		<p>CORE VALUES</p> <p>BRAND PROMISE</p>
<p>KEY COMPETITORS</p>	<p>PERSONALITY, VOICE, TONE, IMAGERY</p>	<p>CULTURE</p>	



 We're a pivotal-moment brand agency

Connect with Daake



Stay in touch with our latest work, our thinking and rebranding news and trends.
daake.com/our-thinking