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## What Is Branding?

### Brand Integration: A tough nut to crack

By Charlie Wrench -[LandorBrand](#)

Integration is considered to be a tough nut to crack, but it doesn't have to be.

Integration doesn't mean ensuring that your logo and end line are always the same. It doesn't mean persuading half a dozen agencies to work together. It is a result, not a process. When customers have a coherent experience whenever and wherever they come across your brand you have achieved integration.

#### It's about ideas not instructions

The capacity to integrate depends more on the quality of the idea than the degree of insistence. Your positioning is your authority, not your position. Before you demand that your partners work more closely together, check that the idea they are to work on is genuinely powerful, differentiating and relevant. Ensure that it can be expressed in a few clear statements and grasped in a single thought. Ideas that can be captured in a nutshell can be more easily understood.

#### It's about right brain and left brain

Verbal definition of special difference is only half the battle & the left brain part. Brands need to evoke a right brain, emotive response, and most brand experiences are visual. Yet most marketers continue to define their brands only verbally. Consequently, each agency signs up to the same agreed adjectives and yet interprets them diametrically differently. It's nuts.

Try to bridge this right brain/left brain gap by working to agree visual analogies for a given verbal definition & for your brand today, for your competitor's brands and for your brand tomorrow. This creates a common frame of reference, which everybody can use, not just nod towards.

1. Forward a set of images to your agencies and ask each to construct what they consider to be the closest visual positioning for your brand today and tomorrow, and for your competitors. Each reply will differ markedly.
2. Get them all in the same room for an afternoon and work with them to create visual positionings together. You will find consensus.

#### It's about delivery, not strategy

Strategy is of no value if it is not delivered. A crucial mechanism is the much derided 'vision, mission and values'. Vision and mission are easy to appreciate, because they appeal to the left brain. Values are often seen as 'mushy', but they are the most meaty of all the strategic outputs.



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They are the kernel of brand actions and behaviours. Today just about every brand is a service brand & staff form the most critical impressions upon customers. Values are the levers by which companies direct staff behaviours and thus control customer experiences.

Values must not be viewed as a 'marketing' exercise, they have to be made real to the whole company, subscribed to daily and be tied to your special difference.

### **It's about the brand you see, not the brand you say**

Brand and badge (aka logo) are Siamese twins not synonyms. Visual change without substantive change is cosmetic, but visual change can be a powerful signifier of real change. Just as the brand is a surrogate for business strategy, so a badge is a surrogate for brand.

A brand's identity not only helps shape brand image but also supports integration. A distinctive, common and systematised brand language across all your touch points is a tangible statement of the intent to integrate, and a means by which to glue a complex brand's multiple expressions and behaviours together. This 'glue' must go beyond logo and typography and include colours, textures, materials, photographic style, tone of voice, etc. From these tools and rules all applications can be developed. They are the component nuts and bolts to construct an integrated brand.

### **It's about brand management, not brand managers**

The final task is the systematisation of strategic and executional guidelines. By creating online Brand Centres, you can manage the total universe of global media assets from a single desktop; you can ensure that the easiest and only way people can access your brand or media assets is through a central repository of approved assets and best practice, supported by 24 hour helpdesks. Such systems remove the need for guidelines updates, enhance the quality of guidance, and reduce the cost of unacceptable practice and save millions of pounds of time and costs. But most significantly, they create a real place for brand integration to be evidenced, evangelised and institutionalised. It might seem a substantial challenge, but you must crack the shell if you want to eat the nut.

Original article: <http://www.landor.com/branding/?action=showArticle&storyid=295>



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