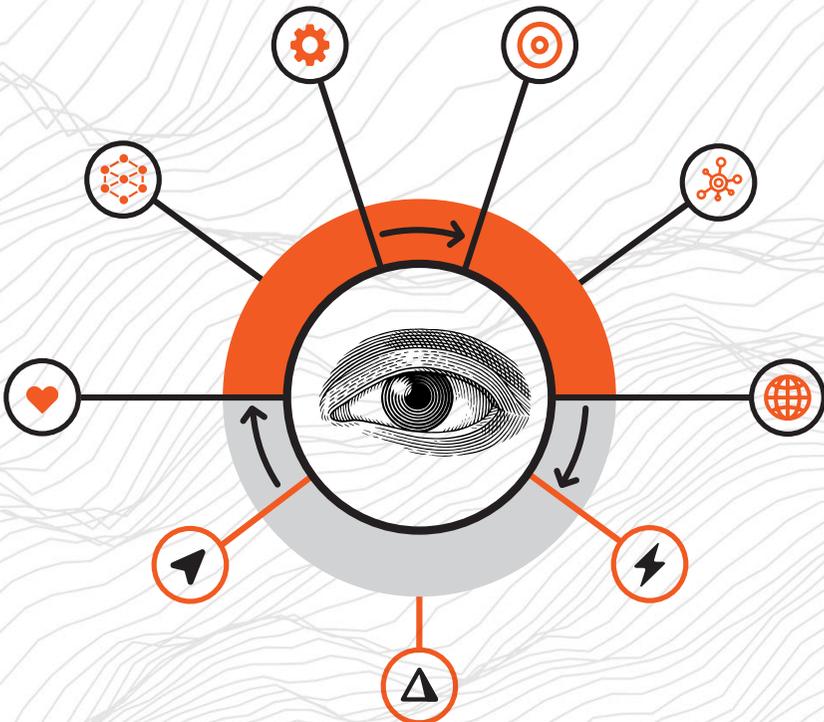


# BRAND ) STRING THEORY™

MAKE YOUR BRAND  
DEMAND A SEARCH PARTY™



RICHARD EVERY



## **BRAND STRING THEORY™**

Make Your Brand Demand a Search Party™

Written by Richard Every

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## Introduction

### Imagine your brand vanished. Would anyone notice?

Your customers, your search party, are already out there. When they find you and connect, that's when you matter.

Brand String Theory links every piece of your brand like evidence on a detective board.



When everything's connected, it's a clear pathway to not only solving most mysteries, but making sense of all the parts.

Brand String Theory works like physics. Simple laws that create infinite possibilities. Just as physicists theorized that everything in the universe connects through vibrating strings of energy, every part of your brand connects through strings of intent.

Most brands don't fail because they're bad; they fail because no one gives a damn. They disappear like buzzwords on a resume, fractional efforts delivering fractional results, or every other business that goes on a safari.

They disappear because every decision needs to be micro-managed. You know the feeling. You can't explain what's wrong, you just know. And that makes you the bottleneck holding everything up.

It's not your fault.

The numbers prove it's getting worse.

According to Forrester's 2024 US Customer Experience Index, **quality among brands sits at an all-time low after declining for an unprecedented third year in a row**, with only 3% of companies currently customer-obsessed.<sup>1</sup>

That is why Brand String Theory exists. It's a structure. Not a style. Not a vibe. Not a trend. It binds everything your brand builds, says, and does.

I learned the power of laws refereeing professional rugby. Most

sports have rules that break under pressure. Rugby has laws that serve as guidance you interpret based on what's happening in front of you.

**| Your brand needs laws, not rules. |**

Laws guide behavior under any condition. Rules break under pressure. This isn't about adding more complexity to your brand. It's about finding the simple laws that eliminate complexity. Instead of managing endless brand guidelines, you'll have clear direction that makes every decision easier.

Instead of feeling forced to micro-manage every detail, you'll trust your team to make the same choices you would. That's freedom. That's confidence. That's what happens when your brand strings connect.

Less is more, as they say.

In practice, it looks like this.

**REALITY CHECK:** 100+ Year Lighting Manufacturer

*They came to me with their tagline, "Innovators in Lighting." Much like every other lighting company. What would happen if they disappeared tomorrow? Someone else would fill the orders. That's the problem. After a century in business, they'd become replaceable.*

*They don't sell lights. They enable critical work in technical spaces where precision, safety, and compliance are non-negotiable. Failure is not an option. Built on that internal engine, I repositioned them*

*to “Illuminating Your World.” They sell outcomes, not parts: A visual identity that read clean and precise, through deliberate color choices, a refreshed mark (that stayed recognizable), and typography that read “We know what we’re doing.”*

*Now they were lighting rooms where lives were on the line, where food processing fed families, and spaces where futures were built. Now they owned the environments where precision, safety, and advancement mattered most.*

*Result: They moved from competing purely on price, to strategic partnerships with consistently higher margins.*

That’s Brand String Theory in action. When everything connects, you stop being replaceable and start being essential. You build something that people need. That they would launch a search party for.

But you know what?

I didn’t always understand this. I’ve made every branding mistake there is: Obsessed over color palettes to the point of googling Pantone’s color of the year for inspiration; built pixel-perfect logos worthy of at least a commitment badge; and written taglines that screamed like a Tony Robbins soundbite.

I’ve spent hundreds of hours hand-drawing typefaces, owned nightclubs, been a DJ, run a software company, and refereed professional rugby, where “Am I mistaken or are you screaming at me?” became my go-to line with angry players, coaches, fans, and all their friends.

That journey taught me something crucial. Building a brand isn't about looking cool; it's about being clear. Looking a little cool, sure. But mostly, it's about not being forgettable.

Somewhere between the design, the late nights, and the deadlines, I learned something else...

**| Under pressure, clarity always leaves the room first. |**

And when clarity goes, so does your brand.

You may ask yourself, Do I need this?

It's for brands that want to matter. Not just to 'build awareness' or 'maximize engagement,' but to build something people care about.

This approach isn't comfortable. If you want comfortable, you can stick with what everyone else is doing. This is for brands that want to win, or compete to be better.

When your visuals, voice, values, and experience all work in the same direction, people connect, trust, and act. Many brands chase the "order of the day," skipping the structure that makes them inevitable in the first place.

But here's what they're really missing: The internal engine. The FORCE that makes every decision clear and every exchange consistent. Every customer experience should feel inevitable rather than accidental.

Most brands start with the external. The logo, the website, the tagline. We're starting with what drives you when no one's watching. Your internal engine.

The theory.

The string.

The Brand String Theory.

It lets you pressure-test and apply every anchor point, every element, without getting lost in theory or safari ambiguity. Each chapter gives you:

A **BRAND LAW** to guide you,  
a **FIELD TEST** of **3 QUICK QUESTIONS** to apply the theory,  
and **LESS IS MORE** to understand where you're going.

### **What you'll learn:**

You won't just sound good; you'll be clear, connected, and perform under pressure. You'll build your brand through 21 elements across three dimensions:

- **Internally:** The engine that drives everything.
- **Externally:** Where your brand meets the world.
- **Eternally:** Where you step into what you're really here to do.

These aren't separate pieces. They're connected by your brand strings. Change one, and the others respond. That's the theory in action.

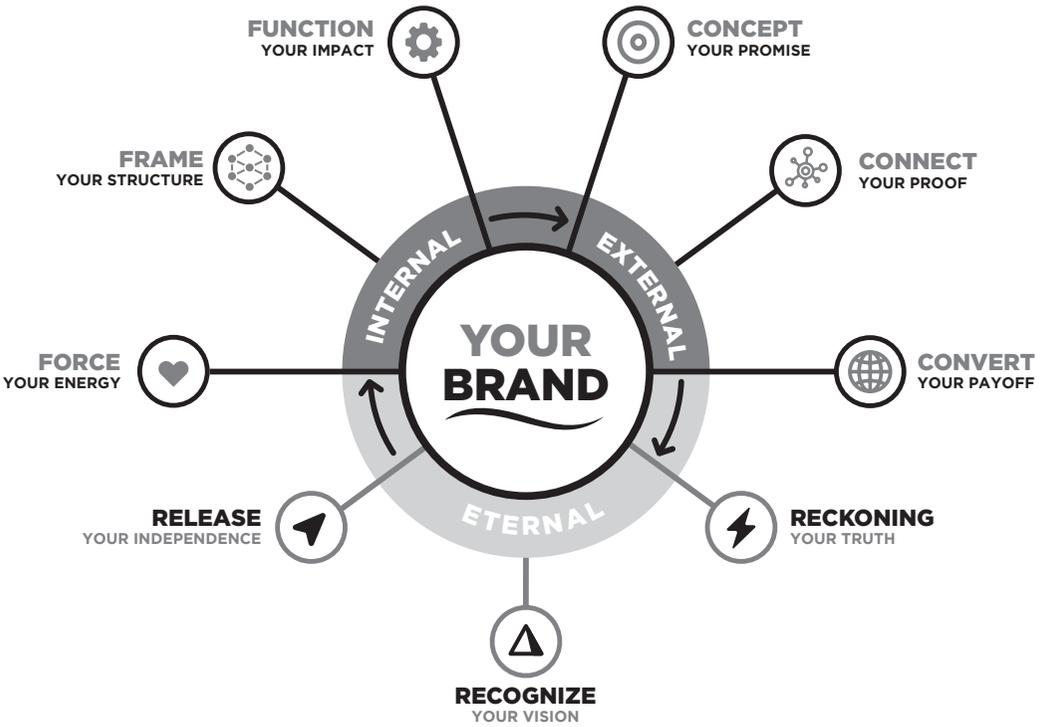
Brand String Theory is for you if:

- You're exhausted from micro-managing because your team isn't aligned.
- You're ready to stop second-guessing every decision and trust what you know is right.
- You want your team to make choices that feel like you made them, even when you're not around.
- You're done explaining because one sentence should deliver.
- You want to know exactly why you belong in every room.
- You want to build a brand so essential that if it disappeared, your customers would miss you forever.

Your strings will be connected.

Your brand will demand a search party.

Now deliver the evidence.



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
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**INTERNAL:** Where it all starts.

**FORCE: YOUR ENERGY**

What drives you when no one's watching. Every second builds or breaks trust. No conviction, no connection.

**FRAME: YOUR STRUCTURE**

Your principle, your rhythm, your yes/no filter. Copying is easy. Staying consistent isn't.

**FUNCTION: YOUR IMPACT**

Where you show up. Where you matter. Every touchpoint earns or loses trust.

**EXTERNAL:** Where your brand meets the world.

**CONCEPT: YOUR PROMISE**

One sentence. One shot. Clarity wins. Clever loses.

**CONNECT: YOUR PROOF**

Design, tone, and behavior all pulling the same way. If it doesn't feel right, it won't resonate.

**CONVERT: YOUR PAYOFF**

What happens next. Call to action is dead. Commitment is everything.

**ETERNAL:** Where you step into what you're really here to do.

**RECKONING: YOUR TRUTH**

Forget safe. Safe is forgettable. Safe is risky. What do you want to be known for?

**RECOGNIZE: YOUR VISION**

What you see when everything connects. Your perspective becomes automatic. Competition becomes irrelevant.

**RELEASE: YOUR INDEPENDENCE**

Who you are, when they're listening. The moment to deliver.

# CONTENTS

---

## INTERNAL

---

### FORCE YOUR ENERGY

- 1 Is your brand **Worth** the energy? 17
- 2 Is **Change**, challenge and inspiration available in your space? 27
- 3 If your brand **Disappeared**, would anyone know it was missing? 35

### FRAME YOUR STRUCTURE

- 4 What **Belief** guides you in every creative or strategic decision? 45
- 5 What **Principle** guides what you do that others don't or won't do? 57
- 6 They remember one thing that your brand **Forged**.  
What would you want it to be? 65

### FUNCTION YOUR IMPACT

- 7 Is your brand **Position** at the right time and place? 75
- 8 When your brand **Works** what do people do? 83
- 9 Your customer journey delivers **Friction**. Kill or convert? 91

- INTERNAL CASE STUDIES: WEWORK, APPLE** 96

## EXTERNAL ---

### CONCEPT YOUR PROMISE

- 10 The real **Hook**. Who are you talking to? 105
- 11 Your brand has only one **Sentence** to live by. What does it say? 111
- 12 Is your message relevant **Today**, or yesterday? 121

### CONNECT YOUR PROOF

- 13 **Benefits** separate your brand. Does your design back it up? 131
- 14 Attention. **Trust**. Where is it, and why is it there? 139
- 15 What brand sparks **Jealousy** (in a good way)? 147

### CONVERT YOUR PAYOFF

- 16 There's **Commitment**. What happens next? 159
- 17 Why the **Excuse**, the hesitation? 167
- 18 When they say yes to their **Future**, what changes? 175

**EXTERNAL CASE STUDY: DYSON** 180

**WORKING BRAND LAWS: STANLEY, NETFLIX, DUOLINGO** 182

## ETERNAL ---

### RECKONING YOUR TRUTH

- 19 Do you know the **Truth**, but haven't told anyone? 191

### RECOGNIZE YOUR VISION

- 20 Your brand has **Vision**. What do you see? 201

### RELEASE YOUR INDEPENDENCE

- 21 Your industry independence in seconds. Are you ready? 211

- 22 Your **Brand String Theory**. Your choice? 219

**THE PROCESS** 224

**THE BRAND LAWS** 225

References 226



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

Where it all starts.

**INTERNAL**

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**FORCE**  
**FRAME**  
**FUNCTION**



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**INTERNAL**  
**FORCE**

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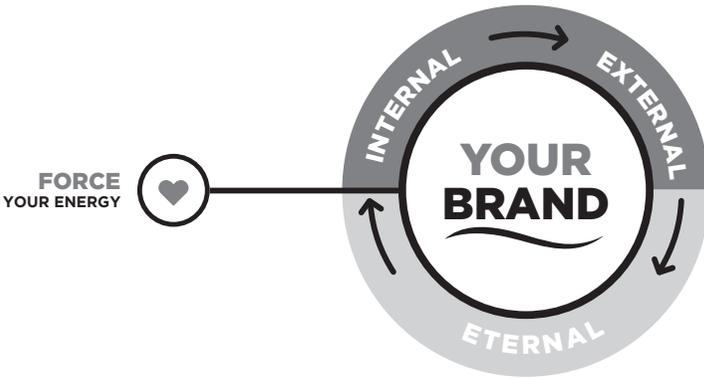


Surprisingly, brands aren't born with gravity.

You build it.

Your FORCE.

Guidance is internal.



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**CHAPTER ONE**  
**FORCE WORTH**

---



**IS YOUR  
BRAND  
WORTH  
THE  
ENERGY?**

Most people start with the same formula: A mission statement that sounds like it was written by a committee, a paragraph about being “family-owned,” and some vague adjectives like “trusted,” “innovative,” or “solution-focused” sprinkled across their homepage like emotional MSG.

It’s safari branding.

I am not the biggest fan of safari branding. Sure, it’s safe, neutral, and comfortable, but is that what you want for your brand? For your life? Not to offend, but to blend?

Picture this: You’re on safari in an open vehicle. A lion can walk past you, look you in the eye, and not see you. Not see that there’s free lunch on top of a metal object. They see it all as one blob. That’s safari branding. A bunch of brands out of their comfort zone pretending to be comfortable, all blending into one indistinguishable mass. Invisible targets.

On the other side of the spectrum, you’ve got the Mirror Guy brands. We all know that guy. They’re screaming how “innovative” or “revolutionary” they are, checking themselves out in every possible reflection, making every conversation about themselves. These brands demand to be admired and force-feed “I’m special” to the world. Their copy reads like it was written while gazing into a mirror, without any self-reflection. Every line engineered to shout “Pick me!”

My son Sam once confronted me about an outrageous claim: “Are you lying for attention?”

That's exactly what Mirror Guy brands do. They lie for attention. Their audience? Lost somewhere around paragraph one.

### **| Most brands are Mirror Guy or on safari. |**

But what if you started from who you really are, from your foundation? In Brand String Theory, your foundation is your FORCE. It's the belief behind the brand, the reason you're willing to do this over and over again even when it's hard, unrewarding, or worse, ignored. It's the edge that says you don't exist to be liked; you exist because something wasn't good enough until you showed up.

#### **REALITY CHECK:** Sports Video Software Company

*They had great technology but couldn't explain why match officials needed it. Their messaging focused on the problem they were solving. It concentrated on the great idea they had to develop officials' skills.*

*We discovered their FORCE. Officials want to be respected, not criticized. Their new positioning became "Become the referee everyone wants on their game." Now officials saw the software as career advancement, not just technology. Result: It became the standard for referee development across North America.*

But first, consider this: You're always building relationships or breaking them down. There's no middle ground.

In our hearts, we all know that it's true. When you're talking to someone, you can build the relationship or not. And when you need to function under pressure, being prepared is everything. I had so

many moments as a referee where it was critical to have empathy. Understanding the pressure players feel and responding with authority and humanity is what kept control of the game.

The good news is, you don't need to build your foundation by developing an endless slide deck. No need for vision boards, or endless workshops.

You can find it in the reason, or the frustration, that got you started. In the pattern you see that no one else is fixing. It's what you believe down to your core.

Even if it doesn't initially test well in a focus group, it will develop the more you understand who you are.

So what fuels you beyond the work itself?

It's not a tagline. It's who you are under pressure.

Many never find it because they're too busy trying to sound right, going on safari, or being Mirror Guy brands, instead of being honest.

But without your core, your FORCE, your brand is a shell. A mood-stricken mood board with no purpose. Look at your last three big decisions. Did you make them based on what you believe, what seemed safe, or what your competitors were doing?

Here's what it looks like out there when you get it right.

## **Real Estate**

Sellers deserve equity protection. They should keep more of what they've built. 1% commission isn't a discount. It's just fair.

## **Branding Agency**

We exist to destroy the notion that safe is smart.  
Safe blends in, and safe is risky.

## **Sustainable Packaging**

We're here to end throwaway culture, one package at a time.  
We design for what happens after the unboxing.

## **Healthcare Billing**

We want hidden fees in healthcare eliminated. Everyone should know what it costs to get well.

Notice how specific these are? "We believe sellers should keep more." Not "We're committed to excellence."

The data backs this up.

Research from SAP Emarsys in 2024 shows that **true loyalty driven by emotional connections has grown by 26% since 2021, reaching 34% in 2024, while customers with emotional connection to brands have a 306% higher lifetime value.**<sup>2</sup>

Brands with a real FORCE behind them are more likely to be shared, remembered, and trusted.

Look at the giants who get this:

**LEGO** is not just about play; it's about inspiring builders of tomorrow.

**Patagonia** isn't about clothes; it's about protecting what's left.

**Tony's Chocolonely** isn't just tasty; it's about ending child labor in chocolate.

**Walmart** shifted from being seen as purely transactional to pursuing large-scale sustainability. They're not just about everyday low prices anymore; it's about everyday impact, making sustainability, opportunity, and belonging accessible to everyone.

These aren't slogans.

Each is a FORCE to be reckoned with.

And not every FORCE changes the world.

**| Every strong FORCE changes someone's world. |**

And drives everything.

If your whole team had to explain what you stand for in one breath, would they all say the same thing?

Or would it sound like amateur improv night?

That's how you test it.

If you can't say it clearly, no one can follow it.

In Brand String Theory, it's like this:

Every second is an impression. And if you don't show up as a FORCE, focused, and building relationships, you easily become forgettable.

Your FORCE is invisible, but like gravity, it affects every decision that enters its field. Get this right, and every other choice falls into natural orbit around it. It drives how you design, how you write, and how you work.

You don't know the real strength of your brand until the lights go out.  
That's when you discover if your strings strengthen under pressure.

You're adding the first piece of evidence to the board. Your FORCE is the anchor point, the element that forms the foundation to everything else. Everything connects to this.

So what makes your brand Worth the energy?

Write it. Say it.

If it takes a paragraph, keep going.

Write it again. Say it again.

Repeat, until you get it to where it's all Worth the effort.

**Use it like your brand (your life) depends on it.**

Because it does.

## FORCE WORTH BRAND LAW

Your **Worth** in one sentence drives everything.

## YOUR FORCE WORTH FIELD TEST

### 1. What was so broken you had to fix it?

Pinpoint the frustration or problem that made you take action.

### 2. If your whole team had to explain what you stand for in one sentence, would they all say the same thing?

Ask three people. If answers are clear and consistent, you're focused.

### 3. Did your last three big decisions reflect your core belief, or just what was safe?

Review any major choice and make sure it's driven by what you stand for.

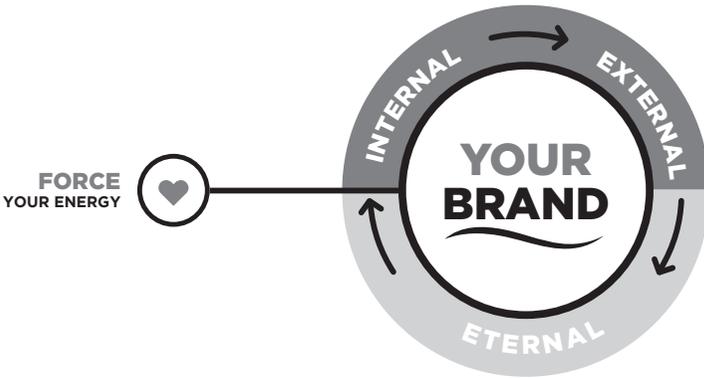
## LESS IS MORE

Instead of juggling multiple "core values," you now have one FORCE that guides every decision.

You just eliminated 80% of your brand confusion.







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**CHAPTER TWO**

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**FORCE CHANGE**



**IS CHANGE,  
CHALLENGE,  
AND INSPIRATION  
AVAILABLE  
IN YOUR SPACE?**

Every brand that matters fights.

Pushing against what's broken, outdated, or just plain stupid in their industry. They're saying "This doesn't have to be this way" while everyone else shrugs and accepts the status quo.

If you're not trying to Change something, you're adding to the pile. The pile is overpopulated. It's a tough place to compete. However...

**| Status quo is not your enemy, it's your guide. |**

Running a nightclub taught me that everyone hears the same music differently. The soundtrack to your life is personal. When they hear something that matters to them, it becomes unforgettable.

And the moment you Change one thing, everything shifts. We divided music into genres and shifted into another genre every two songs without fail, and the result was a massive and more-engaged audience. Every person felt like the club was a soundtrack for their life. Revolutionary? No. But it started a movement that people still talk about today.

But this is very important. You don't need to revolutionize your entire industry. You just need to fix the one thing that's always annoyed you about how business gets done.

It applies to every industry. Brands accept "that's just how it's done," as gospel. But that phrase is where opportunities hide.

The IBM Institute of Business Development reports that **44% of**

**consumers today are purpose-driven, choosing products and brands that align with their values**, marking them as the largest consumer segment, while 30% of consumers are influenced by ethical considerations in their brand loyalty.<sup>4</sup> Translation: Customers don't just want products; they want brands that stand for something. Purpose beats profit margins.

### **What's your stand?**

Take a stand. Challenge the way things are.

### **REALITY CHECK: Tesla**

*Tesla didn't just build electric cars. They declared war on the lie that "sustainable" meant "boring." Before Tesla, electric vehicles were golf carts. After Tesla, they were status symbols with zero emissions and zero compromises. They didn't join the industry, they changed the rules everyone was playing by.*

*That's what your FORCE does. It fights the industry's biggest lie.*

Other common examples are:

**TOMS** challenged the concept that commerce and charity had to be separate.

**Allbirds** took on the sneaker industry's obsession with synthetic materials.

**Oatly** picked a fight with dairy and wasn't polite about it.

### **There are three ways your FORCE creates Change.**

**Cleaning:** Brands that exist because something in their industry actively hurts people. Healthcare companies fighting hidden fees.

Financial services fighting predatory lending. Software companies fighting unnecessarily complex interfaces. (Like TURQUOISE HEALTH, CHIME, and STRIPE.)

**Disrupting:** They want people to act differently. Fitness brands inspiring movement. Environmental companies promoting sustainable choices. Education brands encouraging lifelong learning. (PELOTON, THREDUP, and MASTERCLASS are exact examples.)

**Pioneering:** They're not fixing what's broken, they're showing what's possible. Luxury brands redefining quality. Service companies repositioning customer experience. Tech companies driving what's user-friendly. (Look at BANG & OLUFSEN, TRADER JOE'S, and ZOOM.)

### **| What's your industry's biggest lie? |**

Every industry has one: That foundational assumption everyone accepts but nobody questions.

"Healthy food can't taste good."

"Professional services have to be boring."

"Quality costs more."

"Customer service is a cost center."

"Financial advice is only for the wealthy."

Find your industry's biggest lie and make it your mission to prove it wrong.

As a referee, for me, the biggest lie was that authority meant being

unapproachable. Everyone expects referees to be intimidating and distant to be fair. But that's not the truth. Treating players with dignity and respect while maintaining authority gives the referee more control over the game, and creates a better environment.

Same in business. Find what everyone accepts as truth and ask: "What if it's not?" Your competitors believe the same lies you used to believe. When you stop believing them, you get a head start.

Here's how you know if your Change actually matters:

Does it make people say: "Finally, someone gets it"?

Does it solve a problem people didn't even realize they had?

Does it make competitors scramble to catch up?

Does it attract talent wanting to be part of something meaningful?

If your answer to any of these is yes, you're onto something.

If your answer to all of them is no, you need to fix something.

### **Here's a deeper view of what it looks like.**

**Warby Parker** looked at eyewear and saw an industry controlled by Luxottica charging hundreds of dollars for frames that cost little to make. So they asked a simple question: "What if we sold directly and cut out the middleman?"

Different pricing. Different distribution. Different approach to trying before buying. Their goal was not to make slightly cheaper glasses. They changed what glasses could cost.

The Japanese minimalist retailer **MUJI** got sick of choice overload. While retailers shoved thousands of products at customers, MUJI said no. No logos, no brands, no more. Just things that work. Their “no-brand” obsession proved that less wins. Now they have 1,000+ stores globally because they competed on sanity, not selection.

And here’s a great example of something that annoyed somebody. **BagUps** make biodegradable trash bags. Great. But what really annoys us? Every time we take the trash out, we have to replace the bag. The BugUps box fits tightly into the bottom of your trash can, so you now have a conveyor belt of trash bags. And they’re biodegradable! And veteran-owned.

### **Now what?**

Don’t think innovation, think specifically: What you are trying to Change? What assumption in your industry is wrong?

What would happen if you succeeded? Answer that in one sentence, and you have a fight worth fighting.

Because if you’re not changing anything, it’s tougher to let someone know you’re here. The world needs companies that do things better.

Think about the dumbest thing everyone in your industry accepts as normal.

**Fix that, and you could be onto something.**

## FORCE CHANGE BRAND LAW

**Change** the industry norm that competitors accept.

### YOUR FORCE CHANGE FIELD TEST

**1. What's the industry norm everyone accepts?**

Look for accepted practices that hurt customers or hold progress back.

**2. What would competitors never do?**

Find opportunities where your approach lets you act but their approach stops them.

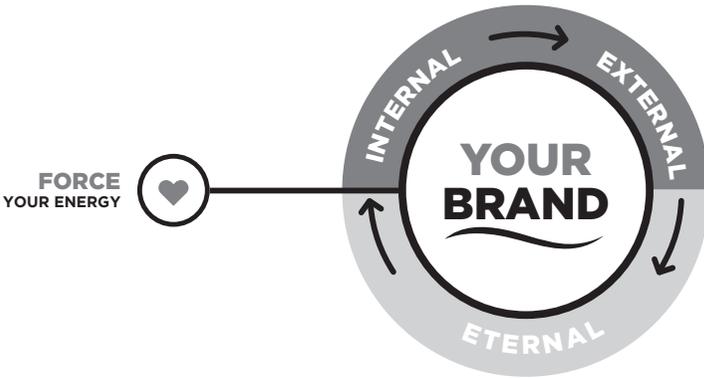
**3. If you succeeded, what would be different for your customers or industry?**

Define the specific Change you're trying to create, not just what you're selling.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped competing with everyone and started building something only you can deliver. Your strategy just simplified to clear distinction.





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CHAPTER THREE

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**FORCE DISAPPEARED**



**IF YOUR BRAND  
DISAPPEARED,  
WOULD ANYONE  
KNOW IT WAS  
MISSING?**

Be honest: If your brand vanished, what hole would it leave?

Not hypothetically. Not from your point of view; from your customers'. Check their emails to you. Do they thank you for doing your job, or for caring about something bigger?

What would your customers miss?

What emotional void would open up?

What practical thing would stop working in their life?

Because if your answer is "good service" or "great product", you're every other brand.

This isn't just about being liked. It's about being needed, then being liked. It's about becoming the thing they trust, depend on, and talk about when you're not in the room.

### **Connected customers are worth more.**

Yet traditional **brand loyalty declined from 77% in 2022 to just 69% in 2024, while 61% of consumers switched** some or all of their business from one brand to another in the last year according to Capital One Shopping.<sup>3</sup>

The brands winning are those building real emotional connections. The value is less price sensitive.

And you can't manufacture emotional connection. It happens when customers see you actually care about the thing you say you care about.

**| They will advocate for you like their reputation depends on it. |**

**REALITY CHECK:** Indoor Air Quality Company

*They were lost in advanced air cleaning systems' technical complexity when trying to sell air quality systems to schools. Drowning in jargon about "advanced UVC-LED air purification technology for HVAC systems" that meant nothing to decision-makers. We discovered what parents would really miss: Confidence that their kids are safe at school. The repositioning to "100% Science, 100% Safer" shifted their focus from facilities' managers to the administration, teachers, and parent advocates. The cold outreach of "PARENTS AGREE: 100%. Their children get sick at school." proved endlessly successful with an astronomical click-through rate of over 50% and conversion of 30%.*

So what happens when you're gone?

Because if nobody misses your brand, you didn't build a brand; you filled a space in the market. Market spaces get replaced. Brands get defended.

Brands stay with people.

**Useful isn't enough.**

Your brand might solve a real problem.

That's step one. But practical utility doesn't build loyalty, it just earns a spot in the rotation.

You're not trying to be an option. You're trying to be the answer.

Here's the line you have to cross:

From function... to feeling.

From "it works" to "I trust it."

From "nice to have" to "how did we live without it?"

Emotional Connection = Brand Strength.

Convenience that feels like care. Innovation that feels like freedom.

Support that feels like understanding. That's what you're really offering. Because "we deliver fast" isn't good enough.

Many can deliver. Few can be trusted.

Look at **Zappos**. Powered by Service.

They didn't invent online shopping. They didn't even invent free returns. They just made customer service feel like a relationship.

Their customers didn't just buy, they bragged. They told stories.

Because it felt like someone actually gave a damn.

And when it feels like someone cares that much, you don't want to let go.

What About **Canva**? Bring your ideas to life in minutes.

They didn't invent design. They just removed the gatekeepers. They said, "You want to make something beautiful? You should be able to."

That's emotional empowerment. That's why their users don't just use Canva, they identify with it.

**| You can't fake that you care. You have to earn it. |**

And then there's **Kicking Horse Coffee!** Wake up. Kick ass. They didn't start in Brooklyn. They started in a garage in the Canadian Rockies, "pretty much near the middle of nowhere." Kicking Horse didn't just sell coffee, they dared you to Kick Ass. It's organic, fair-trade Arabica, roasted right in the Rockies, not to sound fancy, but to guarantee that flavor and ethics actually link. They went all the way: bold, unapologetic, and unforgettable. It wasn't just coffee, it was an identity. And the coffee kicks.

**Earth Breeze** makes sustainable laundry sheets, but they're missing their best story. Their Hope Cloth replaces 1,500 paper towels but does something no paper towel can do: It never stinks. Never. That musty, moldy smell that ruins kitchen towels? Gone. They nailed the one problem every kitchen hates most but instead of hammering it, they wallpaper it with sustainability stats. That's not strategy. That's hiding the very thing people would actually miss if it disappeared.

So what's missing without you?

If you Disappeared, what gap would open up?

A community that felt real?

A problem no one else was solving?

A quality that others won't touch?

A voice that actually feels human?

A cloth that never stinks?

And more importantly, would anyone fight to keep you? Would anyone email the CEO, the founder, someone? Would they take to social media? Send out a search party? Try to rebuild it? That's the goal.

Think of it this way: Demanding a search party is not about vanishing, it's about being here and now. It's where practical meets personal. This isn't about writing a sob story.

### **| *It's about being part of someone's story.* |**

The moments that matter. The routines that stay. The help they didn't expect but now rely on. That's the bar.

### **Relevance Pressure Test**

Let's take **SPOT**, a 1% commission real estate firm in Chicago.

### **What unique solutions or experiences do you offer that others don't?**

"We give home sellers Equity Protection™ and full-service professional real estate representation for just 1% commission. It saves them tens of thousands without sacrificing strategy, support, or results."

### **How do customers emotionally connect with your brand?**

"Vindicated and protected. For decades, sellers suspected 3-6% was excessive for listing on MLS and handling paperwork. We validate that suspicion and protect their biggest asset, their home equity. They don't feel 'smart for getting a deal', they feel relieved someone finally stopped treating their equity like agent profit."

### **What gap would exist in the market without your presence?**

"Without SPOT, sellers have no protection from systematic overcharging. Traditional agents would continue charging premium prices for standard services while pretending they control buyers who

actually find houses online. We're not the 'missing middle,' we're Equity Protection™ in an industry built on extraction."

### **If SPOT Disappeared, would sellers be left in a bad place?**

Sellers would return to being victims of the biggest overcharge in homeownership, losing their protector against predatory pricing.

When you tackle these questions, don't guess.

Be direct. Be specific. Be honest.

If your customers have never said it out loud, your brand's job is to give them the words through everything you are, everything you do, and everything you represent.

This is your Monday morning alarm without a snooze button. No one misses generic. No one fights for safari brands. No one sheds a tear over yet another Mirror Guy's "innovative" or "self-ranked" #1 product that looks like all the others.

You want to know if your brand matters?

Imagine taking it away for a day, a week, a month.  
And if you feel nobody will notice, then start again.

### **Check:**

Do they need you, or do they need what you do?

Do they buy from you, or do they buy into you?

Are you a vendor, or are you their choice?

What happens when a competitor offers the same thing for less?

What happens when someone else does it faster?

What happens when the market shifts?

People don't miss logos.

They miss how you make them feel.

How you make their life easier, clearer, better, sharper.

How you make them brag about having you in their life.

**| *Your brand should always demand a search party.* |**

**That's what you build!**

## FORCE DISAPPEARED BRAND LAW

Build a brand they'd miss forever if it **Disappeared**.

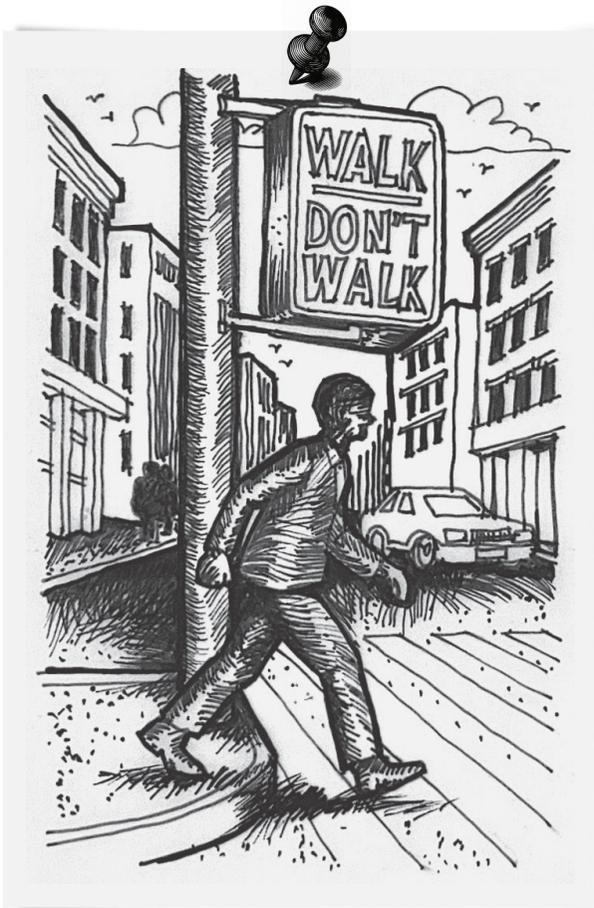
### YOUR FORCE DISAPPEARED FIELD TEST

- 1. If you vanished tomorrow, what would your customers miss?**  
Do customers thank you for doing your job or for caring about something bigger?
- 2. Do they need you, or do they need what you do?**  
If a competitor offered the same service for less, would your customers switch or fight to keep you?
- 3. What's the quick benefit a fan would actually tell a friend?**  
It should be clear in one sentence. A short one.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped trying to be everything to everyone  
and started being essential to someone.  
Your marketing just became 5X more focused.





# BRAND ) STRING THEORY™

## INTERNAL FRAME

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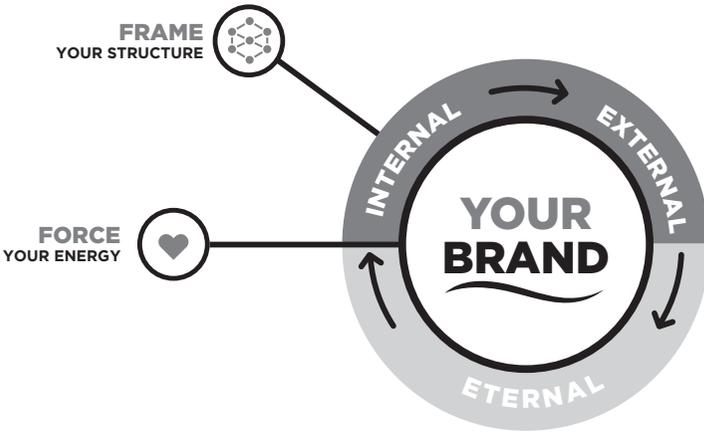


Oddly, consistency is not luck.

You build it.

Your FRAME.

To strengthen under pressure.



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## CHAPTER FOUR FRAME BELIEF

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**WHAT BELIEF  
GUIDES YOU  
IN EVERY  
CREATIVE OR  
STRATEGIC  
DECISION?**

Your brand FORCE gives you purpose. Your FRAME gives you process.

It's the difference between knowing what you stand for and knowing how to act on it. Every day. In every decision. Under every kind of pressure. It stands on the shoulders of your FORCE.

Often brands wing it. They make choices based on what feels right in the moment, what the competitor down the street is doing, or whatever the intern with the design degree suggests. Then they wonder why their brand feels scattered.

A psychiatrist once told me something surprising. It's easy to be mean. This is quitting on choice altogether. Being kind is hard. It's a series of deliberate choices.

Your FRAME is your decision-making DNA. It's what you always say yes to, what you always say no to, and why. It's the filter that makes every business and creative choice feel inevitable instead of arbitrary.

My wife Anna, an architect, designs from the inside out. The internal intent, the flow, and the purpose of each space determines everything you see on the outside. It's about integrity.

Brands work the same way. Your internal FRAME, your Belief about how you do business, should drive every external decision. When the internal structure is well thought out and solid, the external expression feels effortless.

**| Your FRAME Belief is your yes/no machine. |**

Think about it like this... Many successful brands don't question whether something matters. They simply do it, and they do it consistently. These aren't discussions: They're givens.

Because when you know what you believe, deciding becomes easier.

Here's what I've learned from every creative disaster I've survived: When you don't have a clear Belief driving your choices, you get design-by-committee. And that's how you end up looking like you're on safari.

You know the moment when the logo gets passed around? One wants it bolder. Another wants it softer. Your mom wants it blue because she likes blue. Their opinions make sense to them, but none of them see your brand the way you do. They don't see how you've built your brand around your FRAME.

We've all been in conference rooms where someone says, "Maybe we should ideate some disruptive innovations to maximize stakeholder engagement," and everyone nods because nobody knows what the brand really stands for. I've watched brands chase trends instead of staying true to their framework, then wonder why their customers are never quite sure what they're doing. Today it's a custom project; tomorrow, it's a worthless warranty.

**"Ideate" is not a real word.**

Your framework answers the question every creative and strategic choice poses:

“Does this fit who we are?”

Not “Does this look cool?”

Not “Will this go viral?”

But “Is this us?” What Belief guides every choice?

IBM’s 2022 study found that **62% of consumers are willing to change their purchasing habits to reduce environmental impact.**<sup>5</sup> But here’s the thing. People can smell fake from a mile away. Consistent values baked into actual decisions create trust. Inconsistent values that only show up in marketing create skepticism.

Look at how Belief drives decisions:

**Apple:** Intuitive design isn’t negotiable.

Every interface, every button, every swipe follows the same belief: Technology should feel human. They don’t ask “Can we make this more complex?” They ask “Can we make this simpler?” Same framework, different applications.

**Ben & Jerry’s:** Social justice comes first.

They don’t sell ice cream and care about justice. They care about justice and sell ice cream. When a social issue becomes a national conversation, they don’t check with legal. They speak up. Because their framework demands it.

**Hiut Denim:** Craft over everything.

They only make jeans. They could expand into jackets, shirts, and accessories, but their framework says craft matters more than growth. They’re not trying to be the biggest denim company. They’re working to be the best at what they do.

Notice how specific these are? Not “We believe in excellence” or “We’re customer-focused.” Generic garbage that every brand claims.

Your framework should be specific enough that it eliminates options.

Your Belief works like a molecular bond. It determines what sticks to your brand and what gets repelled. Strong bonds create stable structures. Weak bonds fall apart under pressure.

When you know what you always say yes to, you automatically know what to say no to.

### **Here’s how to find yours:**

Look at your last three major decisions. What guided them? What did you refuse to compromise on? What felt non-negotiable?

If you can’t find a pattern, you don’t have a FRAME yet. You have preferences. Preferences change with moods. Your FRAME guides consistency.

Here’s the difference in action: A design company has a preference for “clean design.” When a client wants more features on the homepage, they debate aesthetics and eventually compromise with a cluttered interface.

But a software company with a framework that says “Confused users don’t convert” doesn’t debate. They automatically say no to anything that creates confusion, regardless of client pressure or competitor tactics. The decision is already made.

Preferences are opinions.

FRAMES are laws. Like gravity, they don't waver. When you know your laws, decisions become automatic.

Let's say you're a financial advisory firm. Your FRAME might be:  
"Clarity protects wealth."

Now every decision filters through this Belief:

Complex products? Rejected (they obscure clarity).

Dense legal jargon? Simplified (it confuses clients).

Hidden fees? Eliminated (they destroy trust through opacity).

Privacy protocols? Non-negotiable (protect wealth through privacy).

One belief. Multiple applications. Automatic decisions.

### **FRAME Belief Test**

It's working when: Team members make decisions that feel like you made them. Customers trust how you'll respond to industry changes. Competitors can't copy your approach because they don't share your Belief.

You can say no to profitable opportunities that don't fit, and often they don't benefit you long-term anyway. If you're still debating basic brand decisions, your FRAME isn't clear enough.

Your Belief should eliminate most creative discussions.

Not because you're limiting creativity, but because you're focusing it. When everyone knows what the brand always does and never does, you don't start from: "What do we do?" You start with: "How do we do this better?"

**That's when your brand stops feeling random and starts feeling inevitable.**

## FRAME BELIEF BRAND LAW

Your **Belief** is your yes/no machine.

### YOUR FRAME BELIEF FIELD TEST

**1. What do you always say yes to, even when it's expensive?**

Identify what you prioritize over profit; this reveals your true framework.

**2. What do you always say no to, even when it's profitable?**

Find what is not negotiable, the things you won't compromise on for money.

**3. Do team members make decisions that feel like you made them?**

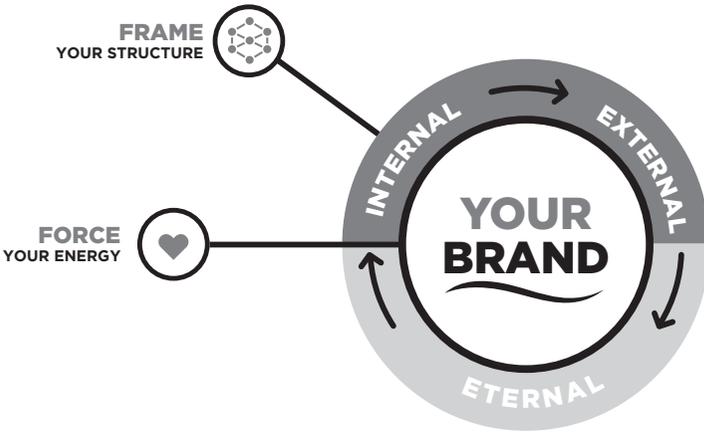
Test if your Belief is clear enough to guide others without your input.

### LESS IS MORE

Your team now makes decisions like you would, even when you're not there. You eliminated creative debates and brand confusion. Leadership just got easier.







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CHAPTER FIVE  
**FRAME PRINCIPLE**

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**WHAT  
PRINCIPLE  
GUIDES WHAT  
YOU DO  
THAT OTHERS  
DON'T OR  
WON'T DO?**

Most brands think differentiation means being louder. Wrong. Differentiation means being definitively you. It's doing something your competitors don't (or won't) do. Not because they can't figure it out, but because it doesn't fit who they are.

Your dominance isn't about outshouting everyone else. It's about doing the thing that makes people say, "Of course they did that."

This is where your FRAME becomes visible. Where your Belief turns into behaviors. Where what you DO and DON'T DO becomes your signature.

**| If your competitors can copy you, you're not different. |**

My software company nearly failed before I understood this. We'd build features our competitors didn't have, and vice versa. Everyone was scrambling to match. We were like cats chasing laser dots.

Features are easy to copy. Behaviors based on a Principle? Impossible. We finally realized competitors couldn't fake our conviction that professional development was broken, that people needed real structure, not just another training platform. That's when we started building what we believed.

**REALITY CHECK:** Industrial Manufacturer

*This client makes serious industrial equipment. The kind with extensive supply chains, quality control processes, and testing protocols that would make NASA jealous. In fact, they built custom components for aerospace labs.*

*Everything about their business screamed “This takes time.”*

*They had something competitors couldn’t match: Precision-engineered systems shipped in five business days. Not weeks. Days.*

*Their competitors took 4–12 weeks minimum for the same work. Why the difference? While everyone else waited for purchase orders to start manufacturing, they pre-assembled the most common configurations and kept them in stock. They restructured their entire warehouse strategy around getting customers what they needed when they needed it.*

*Competitors could have done the same thing, but their frameworks prioritized lean inventory over customer speed. Different Belief, different results.*

*What do customers remember? “They deliver as promised.”*

Here’s what Qualtrics XM Institute found: **89% of companies with “significantly above average” customer experiences perform better financially than their competitors.**<sup>6</sup> But here’s what they didn’t mention: It’s not the experience itself that matters, it’s the FRAME behind it.

So what’s your thing?

Look at brands that get this:

**Costco:** “We trust you.”

Their return policy is insane. You can return almost everything (even a

membership), and get your money back. Their competitors think this is financially reckless. Costco's framework says trust creates loyalty, and loyalty beats transaction-by-transaction profit. Competitors won't do this because they don't trust their customers.

**Spotify:** "Music is personal."

They don't just give you access to songs. They learn what you like and create playlists you didn't know you needed. Discover Weekly. Release Radar. Wrapped. Their competitors see music as inventory.

**Monzo:** "Banking should be transparent."

Real-time notifications for every transaction. No hidden fees. Spending insights that actually help. Traditional banks won't do this because their business model relies on opacity. 12 million customers in 10 years with over 90% customer satisfaction.

Notice none of these are about having more features or better technology. They're about applying different a Belief to the same challenges everyone faces. They are principles.

### **"Won't" Factor**

It's crucial. Your edge isn't just something you do that competitors don't. It's something you do that they won't.

Because doing it would require them to believe something they don't.

### **Finding Your "Won't" Factor**

Ask yourself:

What do you do that feels obvious to you but seems crazy to others?

What Principle guides your decisions that competitors ignore?

What would you refuse to change even if it cost you money?

**BagUps** won't make you replace trash bags one at a time. Their box creates a conveyor belt because ritual elimination matters more than bag sales.

That industrial manufacturer won't wait for purchase orders to start production. They pre-assemble configurations because customer speed beats lean inventory.

As a referee, I won't be unapproachable to seem fair. Dignity and respect with authority works better than intimidation, even when everyone expects the opposite.

## **FRAME Principle Test**

Your differentiator is working when:

- Customers choose you specifically because of this thing.
- Competitors copy your tactics but can't copy your consistency.
- Your team naturally starts doing this without being trained.
- You'd rather lose business than compromise on it.

Most brands have preferences.

A great brand has a Principle.

Preferences break under pressure.

Principles guide under pressure.

Principle as a Law. Unshakable, predictable, unstoppable.

## **Here's the truth.**

Your competitors are watching. They see what works for you. If it's just a feature or a service offering, they'll copy it. But if it's rooted in a FRAME they don't share, they'll struggle to replicate it.

Because FRAME-driven differentiation isn't about what you do; it's about why you do it. And that's much harder to fake. When your edge comes from your Principle, it becomes sustainable. When it comes from your features, it's temporary. What's something you do that your competitors don't, or won't? If you can't answer that clearly, you're competing on price.

And that's a race to the bottom.

**Build something that comes from who you are, not just what you offer.**

## FRAME PRINCIPLE BRAND LAW

Your **Principle** eliminates decisions and makes them obvious.

### YOUR FRAME PRINCIPLE FIELD TEST

**1. What do you do that feels obvious to you but crazy to others?**

Your "obvious" choice reveals a Principle competitors don't share.

**2. What would you refuse to change even if it cost you money?**

Identify a Principle you'll defend regardless of financial pressure.

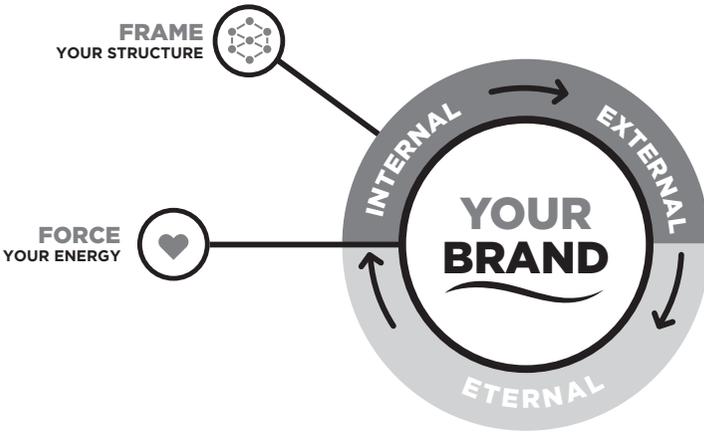
**3. How does your Principle eliminate most options and help you make more obvious decisions?**

If it doesn't eliminate unnecessary choices, it's not strong enough to run your brand.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped chasing features and started owning a Principle. You eliminated the fear of being copied because your advantage now comes from your Brand Laws, not your latest release.





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## CHAPTER SIX FRAME FORGED

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**THEY REMEMBER  
ONE THING  
THAT YOUR BRAND  
FORGED.  
WHAT WOULD YOU  
WANT IT TO BE?**

If someone experienced your brand and could only remember one thing about it, what would you want that thing to be?

Your logo, your tagline, how many awards you've won or how many years you've been in business? None of that matters if it's forgotten by Thursday.

What moment or feeling is going to stick?

Because if nobody remembers you, you're part-time.

Countless brands optimize for everything, which means they're memorable for nothing. They want to be known for quality AND innovation AND customer service AND sustainability AND being family-owned since 1847.

By the time they're done listing their virtues, the customer's out the door.

**| *You can't be memorable for everything.* |**

In nightclubs nobody remembers the décor, the drink list, or the odd song. The set is the thing. The story. That makes them feel like songs were chosen specifically for them. That's what's Forged the connection.

And once it's Forged, it's the one thing that lasts.

**Memory is a thief.**

Brands don't realize: Every additional thing you try to be remembered for steals memory from everything else.

## | **Memory isn't additive. It's competitive. |**

When you try to own five things, you own nothing. When you own one thing completely, that one thing owns everything else.

But here's what others won't tell you... you can't just pick your one thing from a menu. You can't brainstorm your way to memorable. You have to Forge it.

## | **Your one thing isn't chosen. It's created. It's Forged. |**

### **REALITY CHECK:** Circadian Lighting

*They have incredible technology, developed so astronauts could operate in space in normal day/night rhythms. Their FORCE was that artificial light ruins a person's ability to operate effectively. Their FRAME demanded precise sunlight wavelength in every light.*

*When combining their FORCE and FRAME, the inevitable outcome emerged: "Think Brighter."*

*Schools don't buy circadian lighting. But everyone buys kids who naturally perform better. Factories don't buy circadian lighting. But everyone buys accuracy in the workplace. Hospitals don't buy circadian lighting. But everyone buys quicker healing patients.*

Your one thing is built, not picked. It's Forged.

Brands often try to choose their memorable thing from what already exists. Wrong approach. Your memorable thing emerges when your FORCE and FRAME work together.

Look at the patterns:

**Sephora:** Their FORCE (everyone deserves to see their potential) + their FRAME (technology removes guesswork, transformation over transaction) = "I don't just shop there. They make me see my best self."

As a referee: My FORCE (fair game for everyone) + my FRAME (authority, empathy, consistency under pressure) = "Be the referee that teams want on their game."

The memorable thing is Forged through systematic alignment.  
Through connecting the strings.

### **Forgetting is automatic.**

Learning Guild research on the forgetting curve shows **humans forget 50% of new information within an hour. After 24 hours, we've forgotten 70%. After a week? We're down to about 10%.<sup>7</sup>**

But emotional experiences? Those hold.  
Not the details, but the feeling.

That's why your one thing can't be functional. "Great customer service" isn't memorable because everyone claims great customer service. "The place that made me feel like they actually cared" is memorable because most places don't.

### **Your FRAME is Forging your one thing.**

Right now, your FRAME is constructing the foundation for the one thing that will hijack memory. But you won't see what it is until your FUNCTION brings it to life.

## **The Memory Hierarchy**

Works in order:

1. How you made them feel.
2. What you helped them accomplish.
3. What you actually did.
4. What you said you'd do.

99% of brands focus on #4. Smart brands own #1.

Your Belief and Principle aren't just decision-making tools. They're the architecture for something memorable.

When you move into FUNCTION, you'll see how your FORCE and FRAME create inevitable outcomes that competitors can't replicate.

Because in a world where everyone's distracted and overwhelmed, being forgettable is the only unforgivable sin.

**Your one thing is being Forged right now.**

When it's complete, it becomes the reason people would search for you. Not your products. Not your services. You.

## FRAME FORGED BRAND LAW

Every memorable brand has that one thing that's **Forged**.

### YOUR FRAME FORGED FIELD TEST

**1. How does your FORCE + FRAME create something inevitable?**

What emerges when the problem you're fixing meets your Principle?

**2. What's the feeling people remember after working with you?**

Not what you did, but how you made them feel about themselves.

**3. If competitors copied everything you do, what couldn't they replicate?**

That thing they can't fake, that's your one thing.

### LESS IS MORE

Instead of optimizing 20 touchpoints, you're perfecting one. You eliminated the pressure to be remarkable at everything. Your customer experience just got laser-focused.







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**THEORY™**

**INTERNAL**  
**FUNCTION**

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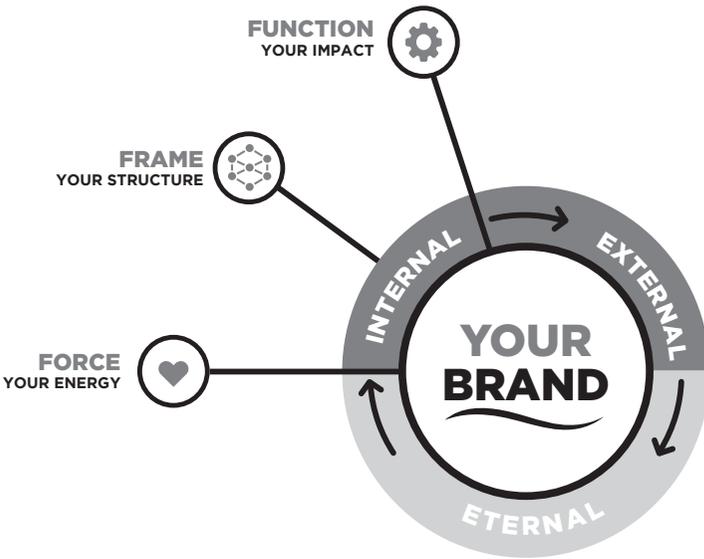


Indeed, brands aren't born visible.

You build them.

Your FUNCTION.

It's intentional friction.



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CHAPTER SEVEN

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**FUNCTION POSITION**



**IS YOUR  
BRAND  
POSITION  
AT THE RIGHT  
TIME AND  
PLACE?**

Your brand FORCE gives you purpose.

Your FRAME gives you structure.

Your FUNCTION is where intention meets reality.

Where you choose to place your bets and focus your presence.

This is where your internal brand strategy either works in the real world or falls apart completely.

Brands typically show up everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. They're on Instagram posting motivational quotes, LinkedIn sharing industry insights, and sending emails about "exciting updates" that excite exactly no one. They mistake presence for strategy.

**| *Being everywhere doesn't make you visible.* |**

Space and time are connected. You can't be in the right place at the wrong time, or the wrong place at the right time, and expect anything meaningful to happen.

Your brand works the same way. Position and timing aren't separate; they're connected forces that determine if you'll be there when it matters.

Refereeing professional rugby revealed that positioning is everything. There's only one referee with 30 players. You can't cover every inch of the field. But you can be in the right place at the right moment, moving early and arriving before the action develops.

The key isn't just being where something happens. You need to anticipate where it will happen and get there first. You have to

Position yourself as consistently as possible to see the action from the right angle. It increases your accuracy. When your rhythm is off, and your timing is flawed, you miss critical moments. That can destroy your credibility. Not because you're not fast enough, but because you didn't arrive early enough. Your strategy is off.

### **REALITY CHECK:** Grocer Flower Store

*A high-end grocer wanted to add an in-store florist brand. They needed a name, and positioning that would make flowers an attraction, not an afterthought.*

*Instead of competing with every florist in town across every channel, we focused on one thing: Making the flowers the heroes of the space. Branded in olive (I know) and black (of course), the flowers became the focal point that drew customers deeper into the store. The positioning was simple: "This isn't just grocery shopping; it's curating your life." The result was successfully implemented across multiple stores. Customers specifically visited for the experience. They didn't need to be on every platform or in every location. They needed to own one experience.*

Salesforce found that **76% of consumers expect consistent interactions across departments, platforms, and devices.**<sup>8</sup> But here's what they didn't mention: "Consistency" doesn't mean "conformity." Your brand should feel the same everywhere, but it doesn't need to be everywhere.

### **Anticipation**

Brands that win don't react to where their customers are. They anticipate where they're going to be.

While competitors are still figuring out LinkedIn, the smart brands are already building relationships there. While others debate TikTok, the leaders are testing and learning. While most brands follow trends, the memorable ones create them.

This isn't about being everywhere first. It's about being in the right place early enough to matter.

### **The Presence Problem**

The default approach is: More touchpoints equal more impact. Wrong. More touchpoints without clear strategy equals more confusion.

Look at brands that get this right:

**Nike:** They're everywhere today, but they didn't start that way. They dominated elite college runners first. When they expanded to basketball with Jordan in '84, it wasn't random. Same system, different sport. They earned the right to be everywhere by being essential somewhere first.

**Glossier:** Built a billion-dollar brand primarily through Instagram, not by spreading thin across every platform. They understood their audience lived there, so they became unmissable, in one place.

**Notion:** Their help docs, YouTube tutorials, and product interface all feel like the same brain created them. Clean, helpful, human.

### **Positioning**

Here's how you know if your brand is showing up strategically:

**Early Movement Analysis:** Are you part of the conversation as it unfolds, or are you always catching up? Track when you arrive relative to when opportunities develop.

**Consistency Check:** Can someone experience your brand on three different touchpoints and describe you the same way? If not, your positioning is scattered.

**Anticipation Test:** Are you positioning where your customers are going, or where they've already been?

## **Arrival**

Where you show up:

**Anchor Points:** These are your non-negotiables. The 2-3 places where your brand must be flawless. For a Business-to-Business (B2B) software company, this might be your website, your product interface, and your customer support. For a local restaurant, it might be your physical space, your takeout packaging, your word-of-mouth experience.

**Growth Points:** These are your opportunistic plays. Places where your audience is active but you're not yet strong. Test small, measure everything, double down on what works.

**Exit Points:** These are the places you need to stop wasting energy. Just because other brands are there doesn't mean you need to be.

## **Reality Check Questions**

If you disappeared from this touchpoint tomorrow, would anyone notice and would anything change about your business?

If you could only show up in three places, which three would move the needle most?

Where are your customers going next, and are you already there waiting for them?

Businesses routinely can't answer these questions honestly because they've never thought strategically about presence. They've just added touchpoints like collecting stamps.

You're the architect. You choose your stage, you decide where to invest your energy, you build the map that drives your brand's visible footprint.

It's all about deciding where you show up with intention. With discipline. With distinctive presence.

**Be positioned where it matters.**

## FUNCTION POSITION BRAND LAW

Arrive early, **Position** consistently, and see clearly.

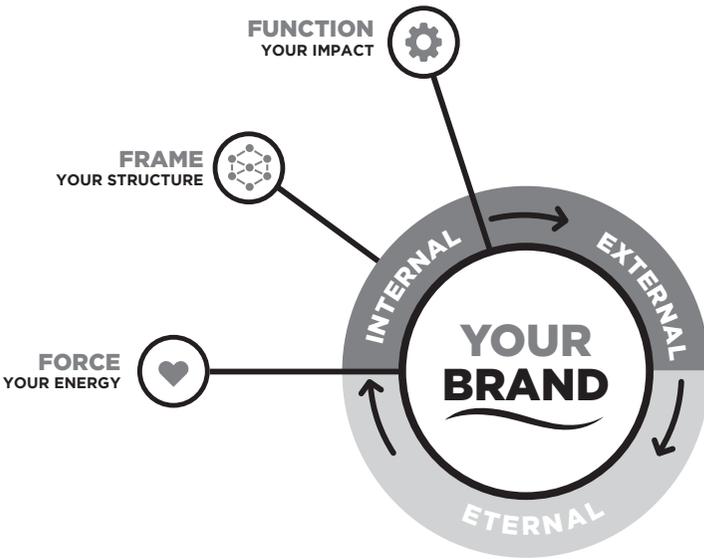
### YOUR FUNCTION POSITION FIELD TEST

- 1. Where do your actual customers find you (not where you think they should)?**  
Track real customer paths, not where they should come from.
- 2. Are you positioned where your customers are going, or where they've already been?**  
Test if you're anticipating opportunities or chasing them.
- 3. What touchpoint, if removed tomorrow, would actually hurt your business?**  
Separate essential presence from nice-to-have presence.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped spreading yourself thin and started showing up focused. You eliminated the need to be everywhere and started owning spaces that matter.





**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**BRAND** ) **STRING  
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**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**FUNCTION WORKS**

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**WHEN YOUR  
BRAND  
WORKS,  
WHAT DO  
PEOPLE DO?**

In practice, brands measure success by vanity metrics. Likes, followers, impressions, brand awareness.

You know your brand Works when people change their behavior because of it. Not when they see you, but when they act differently because you exist.

The behavior you create is the only metric that matters.

I see this all the time working with brands that get excited about engagement rates. They're measuring applause while their business stagnates.

It's great having a packed dancefloor one night, but it needs to be repeated consistently to be a valid metric.

**REALITY CHECK:** Women's College Rugby Association

*They needed to establish themselves as a legitimate FORCE working toward making rugby a recognized NCAA sport. The challenge wasn't awareness, as people knew rugby existed. The challenge was changing how people thought about rugby's place in American college athletics. The rebrand positioned them not as "just another sports organization," but as the definitive pathway for rugby to join the NCAA family. We focused on the behaviors that would prove legitimacy, which has increased university participation, and standardized rugby competition structures within the US landscape. Since the rebrand, they've been steadily growing toward their NCAA goal. Universities are adding programs, athletes are choosing rugby over other sports, and most importantly, athletics directors are taking meetings they wouldn't take before. The brand Works because it changed what people do, not just what they think.*

Research shows that **88% of consumers trust word of mouth from friends and family over brand messaging.**<sup>9</sup> It means that when your brand Works, your customers become your marketing department. But this only happens when you give them something worth talking about.

### **The Action Hierarchy**

Not all customer actions are created equal. Here's how to recognize when your brand is actually working:

**Level 1: Compliance:** Customers do what you ask them to do. Fill out the form, make the purchase, download the app. This is table stakes.

**Level 2: Preference:** They choose you when they have options. This means your brand is working at a basic level. You've created enough differentiation to win in a comparison.

**Level 3: Advocacy:** They recommend you without being asked. They bring your brand into conversations naturally. This is where many brands want to be, but few achieve.

**Level 4: Identity:** They incorporate your brand into their identity. They don't just use your product; they identify with what it represents. This is rare and powerful.

**Level 5: Defense:** They defend your brand when others criticize it. They feel personally invested in your success. This is the holy grail.

Most brands optimize for Level 1 and wonder why their growth stagnates. Smart brands design for Level 3 and above.

### **The Behavior Diagnostic**

**Purchase Patterns:** Are people buying once or buying repeatedly? Are they upgrading, expanding, or just replacing? The pattern tells you if your brand is working or if you're just convenient.

**Sharing Behavior:** What do people share about you, and how do they share it? Do they post pictures? Do they tag friends? Do they tell stories? The type of sharing reveals the depth of connection.

**Word-of-Mouth Quality:** When people recommend you, what do they say? Do they explain features or do they describe outcomes? Do they sound like your marketing copy or do they use their own words?

**Keeping vs. Finding Customers:** Are you growing because existing customers stay longer and do more, or because you're constantly finding new customers to replace ones who leave? The ratio tells you everything about brand strength.

### **REALITY CHECKS:**

#### **Airbnb: Level 4: Identity**

*They never asked customers to post photos of their stays. They did it anyway. Because staying in an Airbnb didn't feel like lodging. It felt like belonging. Identity, not transaction. When a brand makes people feel like they're part of something bigger, sharing becomes instinctive, not incentivized.*

### **Oura Ring: Level 3: Obsession**

*Oura Ring users don't just wear the ring. They become biometric nerds, sharing sleep scores in the app's "Circles" feature, comparing recovery data, and building rituals around their metrics. Behavior driven by self-optimization. They don't just use the product, they let it shape their routines.*

### **Lush: Level 2: Performance**

*Lush customers film themselves using bath bombs, create tutorials, and proudly display their hauls on social media. They turned personal care into performance because the brand makes them feel both creative and ethical. That's Level 2. Behavior as self-expression.*

### **Slack: Level 4: Identity**

*Slack users aren't just messaging. They're making custom emojis, building elaborate channels, and introducing Slack to new teams. It's not "the company uses Slack." It's "We are a Slack team" vs. an email team. That's Level 4 behavior, not tool behavior.*

Notice that none of these brands are asking people to share. They've created experiences worth sharing. There's a difference.

### **The Multiplier Effect**

When your brand really Works, customer behavior creates more customers without additional effort from you. This is when you know you've built something sustainable.

I learned this the hard way with my son Sam. When he was very young, he asked me a this-or-that question and I sarcastically answered, "Yes." The shock on his face was eternal revenge. Now,

he's an adult, and when I ask him anything, (even "What are you doing?"), he'll answer "YES." Right back at me. One moment of sarcasm created a permanent behavior pattern.

Brands work the same way. Every interaction teaches customers how to interact with you next time.

But here's what most companies miss. The behavior you want to create must align with the behavior your brand naturally encourages. You can't force people to share if your experience isn't share-worthy. You can't create advocates if you're not advocacy-worthy.

As a rugby referee, I learned that it's not about me, it's about the game. Players start defending your calls when they trust your judgment.

**| *Respect isn't demanded, it's consistently earned.* |**

With brands, word-of-mouth often happens organically when customers trust that your success aligns with their success.

**Build something that your customers and clients will defend.**

## FUNCTION WORKS BRAND LAW

When your brand **Works**, people don't just buy, they belong.

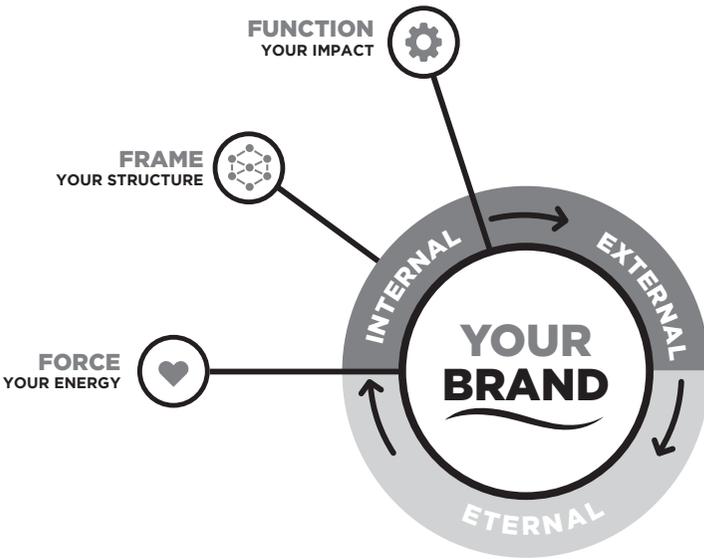
## YOUR FUNCTION WORKS FIELD TEST

- 1. What do your best customers do that the average don't?**  
Look for patterns in behavior, not just demographics or purchase amounts.
- 2. How do people discover you (their behavior, not your marketing)?**  
Track actual discovery paths, referrals, searches, and word-of-mouth.
- 3. What do people do differently because your brand exists?**  
Look for behavior changes you create, not just compliance or transactions.

## LESS IS MORE

You stopped optimizing for vanity metrics and started measuring what actually matters. Your success just became predictable instead of random.





**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
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**CHAPTER NINE**  
**FUNCTION FRICTION**

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**YOUR  
CUSTOMER  
JOURNEY  
DELIVERS  
FRICTION.  
KILL OR  
CONVERT?**

Every brand has a breaking point. That moment where the experience goes from smooth to frustrating, where trust turns to doubt, where customers bail out or stick around.

So many brands don't know where their breaking point is. They never honestly look for it. They optimize for the good bits and ignore the fragile parts until customers complain.

Too late!

Teradata found that **32% of customers will walk away from a brand they love after a single bad experience.**<sup>10</sup> Think about that. One bad experience can undo years of good. Finding your Friction points isn't just important, it's survival.

I learnt this lesson many times over, and you may have too. In any relationship, you have to be honest and consistent, because it can be derailed when small frustrations build and your true self is exposed.

The same thing happens with brands. They might handle the big moments well; the purchase, the delivery, the major interactions. But they miss the small Friction points that accumulate until customers reach their breaking point.

**| *Understanding Friction is about making things clearer.* |**

### **Is all Friction bad?**

Almost all brands think Friction is always bad. Friction can be strategic. **Apple** makes you jump through hoops to get support, but they do it in a way that feels premium, not frustrating. The Genius Bar appointment system ensures quality support that builds brand trust.

And if you've used it, it's exciting and packed with anticipation. Even if they say your device is dead forever, it's okay. Everyone gave it their best shot. And the outcome feels Frictionless.

Then there's two-factor authentication. Pain in the ass? Yes. Protects everyone? Also yes.

My wife Anna designs for how people actually move and live in spaces, not just how her buildings look in photos. She creates deliberate contrast. Intentional Friction. Materials that transition from smooth to rough. A lower ceiling which leads to a room that lifts up to the sky. A narrow passageway to open green spaces. "The lungs of the house," as she puts it. She guides people naturally toward the experiences that matter most. Your brand should guide people the same way. The design is intentional.

**IKEA** makes you build it yourself. You hate it during, love it after. The effort creates ownership.

**Alinea** in Chicago makes you prepay for your meal when you book, and reservations open at specific times like concert tickets. The Friction makes it feel like an event, not just dinner.

### **Ask**

"Does this Friction protect value or make things harder?" If it protects value, quality, security, and service, it's strategic. If it just makes things harder because you haven't fixed your process, it's destructive.

### **REALITY CHECK: Trader Joe's**

*They have strategic Friction everywhere. Limited selection (FRAME*

*Forged: Curated not comprehensive). No online shopping (FUNCTION Works: In-store discovery). No sales or coupons (FRAME Principle: Everyday value). Every Friction point is built from their internal engine and it reinforces who they are. Competitors can't copy it without becoming them.*

As a referee, the best matches are the ones where no one mentions or thinks about the referee. The same applies to brands. The best customer experiences are the ones where people barely notice the process, they just focus on the outcome.

**| Your best performances may go unnoticed, but they're memorable. |**

Fans remember the game. Fans remember your brand.

**Major League Baseball** sponsorship revenue hit \$2.05 billion in 2025, up 68% since 2022. The 2025 World Series averaged 51 million viewers. Game 7 drew the largest global audience in 34 years. What changed? Baseball removed destructive friction. Pitch clock killed dead time. Eliminating defensive shifts restored action. Limiting mound visits kept momentum. Purists complained, but revenue rose because MLB stopped protecting rituals and started protecting attention.

Your customers aren't asking you to transform everything. They're asking you to remove the Friction that makes engagement feel like work, and to be intentional about the Friction you create. Brands worth searching for don't make things easy. They make the right things inevitable.

**Design Friction that serves your brand.**

## FUNCTION FRICTION BRAND LAW

Balance **Friction** to deliver the best outcomes.

### YOUR FUNCTION FRICTION FIELD TEST

**1. Where do your customers struggle, hesitate, or give up?**

Map actual problem points in your customer journey, not assumed ones.

**2. What Friction protects your brand?**

Identify strategic Friction.

**3. What would break if you doubled your customer volume tomorrow?**

Identify systems that work now but won't scale, your hidden Friction points.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped letting Friction happen to you and started making it work for you. You eliminated the bad Friction and kept what builds value. Your customer experience just became intentional.



# INTERNAL CASE STUDIES WEWORK

WeWork convinced the world that real estate was tech and hit \$47 billion. They thought they had FORCE: “Changing how the world works” and killing long-term leases. But this was their tagline masquerading as their FORCE.

As my son Sam asked: “Are you lying for attention?” That’s exactly what WeWork did. They fell in love with grand messaging instead of fixing what was actually broken.

They changed nothing. Coworking had existed since forever. WeWork became Regus with kombucha. The disaster was: No FRAME. No Principle. No Discipline.

They expanded everywhere, said yes to everything, and couldn’t decide if they were tech or a landlord. When you stand for everything, you stand for nothing. Zero Friction meant members could join and leave easily, while WeWork carried serious long-term leases.

The fix back when they started, would be profit-share deals with landlords. Prime metros only with 70%+ pre-sold before expansion. Pricing ladder for longer commitments. Tech workspaces people fight to stay in. Learn to say no.

What they did.

# WEWORK INTERNAL

FORCE		
WORTH	✘	"We're changing how the world works"
CHANGE	✘	Zero. Regus with a whistle and a bell.
DISAPPEARED	✔	Long-term leases would not be obsolete.
FRAME		
BELIEF	✘	No consistent decision-making belief.
PRINCIPLE	✘	No "won't factor." Said yes to everything.
FORGED	✘	Workspace? Tech company? Real estate company?
FUNCTION		
POSITION	✘	Turned up everywhere without strategy.
WORKS	✔	People change how they work.
FRICTION	✘	Easy to join, but easy to leave.

What they could've done.

# WEWORK INTERNAL FIX

FORCE		
WORTH	✔	Long-term leases are inflexible and expensive.
CHANGE	✔	Profit-sharing deals with landlords eliminate risk.
DISAPPEARED	✔	Long-term leases would not be obsolete.
FRAME		
BELIEF	✔	70% occupied before expansion.
PRINCIPLE	✔	Pricing ladder for discounts.
FORGED	✔	Tech workspaces that build community.
FUNCTION		
POSITION	✔	Focus on major metro business districts.
WORKS	✔	People change how they work.
FRICTION	✔	Easy to join, but a minimum commitment unlocks value.

# APPLE INTERNAL

## FORCE

<b>WORTH</b>	✓	Technology is intimidating and complex.
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They removed the need to think about how technology works.

<b>CHANGE</b>	✓	Technology should feel human.
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Didn't compete on specs and built something only they could.

<b>DISAPPEARED</b>	✓	Seamless digital ecosystems would be gone.
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They're not everything to everyone but essential to many.

## FRAME

<b>BELIEF</b>	✓	Intuitive design isn't negotiable, it's the yes/no machine.
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Every decision is filtered through one belief: Intuition.

<b>PRINCIPLE</b>	✓	"Less is more" always delivers.
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Stopped chasing features and owned a Principle that delivered quality hardware and software.

<b>FORGED</b>	✓	Making premium feel simple.
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They perfected one truth: Simplicity.

## FUNCTION

<b>POSITION</b>	✓	Experience first retail stores.
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Consolidated presence and built temples.

<b>WORKS</b>	✓	Customers as brand evangelists.
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Started measuring passion and belonging.

<b>FRICTION</b>	✓	High price, premium value.
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Stopped fearing high prices by delivering exclusive value.

Apple was just another computer company. Beige boxes fighting on specs. When Jobs returned in 1997, he didn't invent something new. He reasserted a principle that changed everything. Technology should feel human, not intimidating.

Most of the industry accepted complexity as inevitable. Manuals, learning curves, frustration. Jobs refused. His FORCE: Technology was a barrier. Apple's mission was to make it usable.

This wasn't about being different. It was about fixing what was broken. Apple's FRAME became their competitive weapon. Every decision filtered through one belief: That intuitive design isn't negotiable. If something required explanation, it was cut.

Their PRINCIPLE separated them permanently from competitors. While others added buttons and options, Apple simplified. The headphone jack. DVD drives. Ports. Each removal felt reckless to the industry, but obvious to Apple.

The result? Making complex technology work and feel simple became their Forged identity. Not chosen in a strategy session but inevitable from their internal engine.

FUNCTION followed naturally. Experience-first retail stores where you touch products before buying. Premium pricing that filters for believers, not bargain hunters. Loyal customers who not only purchase the product, but also evangelize it.

Apple's strings connect: Broken technology + design obsession = seamless experience. Competitors copy their look but miss their conviction. They can't fake the principle that drives every choice.

When your FORCE and FRAME align this clearly, external success is predictable. Apple didn't just build better computers; they proved technology could feel human. That now drives a trillion-dollar ecosystem competitors still can't replicate.

The lesson: Your internal engine determines everything external. Get the strings connected, and success follows the pattern.



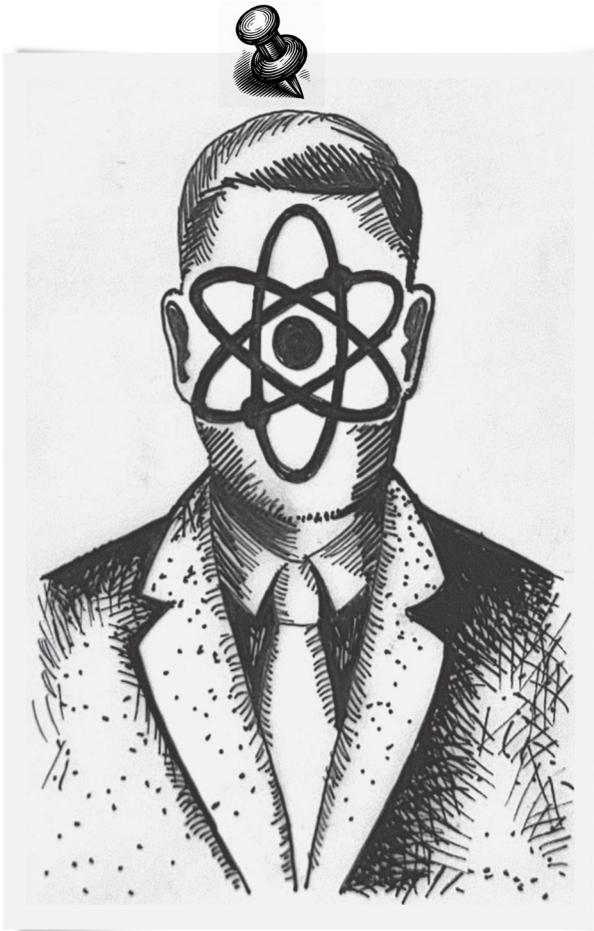
**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

Where your brand meets the world.

**EXTERNAL**

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**CONCEPT**  
**CONNECT**  
**CONVERT**



**BRAND** ) **STRING  
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**EXTERNAL  
CONCEPT**

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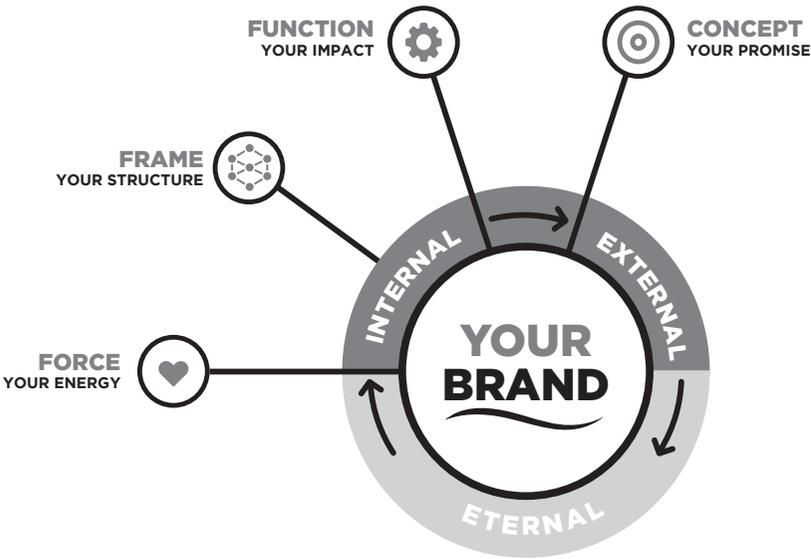


A few seconds can break your brand.

You build it.

Your CONCEPT.

It's your millisecond survival strategy.



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
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**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER TEN**  
**CONCEPT HOOK**

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**THE REAL  
HOOK.  
WHO ARE  
YOU TALKING  
TO?**

It's the feeling behind the FUNCTION.

Your customers aren't just buying your product or service. They're buying how it makes them feel about themselves, their business, and their future. But first, you need to know who you're talking to and what they're feeling.

**REALITY CHECK:** Hazardous Location Manufacturer

*They sell specialized products for hazardous locations. Oil rigs, chemical plants, mining operations. Technical specs matter, but that's not what drives decisions.*

*Hazardous Location ratings are complex, and most people in the industry can't explain their way around the classes, divisions, zones, groups, and temperatures, nor what they actually mean. Their breakthrough came when we created a "Hazardous Location Guide" infographic, that became their most-shared content. Technical expertise presented visually built rock-solid trust.*

*But here's what really happened: Everyone involved in the selection and purchasing process now felt confident they were making the right choice.*

**| The emotion isn't excitement or happiness. It's relief. |**

Research from Google and CEB's Marketing Leadership Council found that **B2B buyers are 50% more likely to purchase when they see personal value (such as career advancement or confidence in their choice) and are 8x more likely to pay a premium when personal value is present.**<sup>11</sup> People don't just buy what you sell; they buy how it makes them feel.

But most companies chase the wrong emotions. They think everyone wants to feel “excited” or “inspired.”

The Corporate Examples Everyone Knows (consumer brands selling feelings directly) are:

**Coca-Cola:** Happiness and togetherness

**Nike:** Motivation and achievement

**LEGO:** Creativity and imagination

Deeper emotional Hooks are often quieter:

**Relief** (finally, someone who gets it)

**Confidence** (I’m making the smart choice)

**Vindication** (I knew this was the right approach)

**Security** (this won’t come back to haunt me)

Examples are:

Relief: **TurboTax.** “Taxes, done smarter” is what users feel. Relief from the anxiety of tax season thanks to clear guidance and a sense that the software “gets” all their needs.

Confidence: **Uniqlo.** The Japanese basic clothing retailer said, “Quality basics for everyone.” Fashion is traditionally divided into luxury or disposable. Uniqlo’s Hook: Confidence that functional clothing is accessible regardless of budget.

Vindication: **Whole Foods.** Longtime shoppers who prioritized organic or ethical sourcing now see mainstream adoption and media validation. Their choice was “right all along.”

Security: **ADT.** “I’m always protected.” Homeowners know their investment in security systems buys peace of mind; they won’t have to regret “what if?”

**| B2C emotions are about how they feel. |**

**| B2B emotions are about career advancement. |**

In B2B, smart choices make everyone look good. They're not just putting their trust in you; they are putting their life on the line for you.

The line is where you name who you're talking to and what they're feeling. It leads into your headline.

That's the line. It identifies who this is for and what they're feeling.

Your Hook attracts, delivers, and empowers. It's about talking directly to the right people. It delivers clarity and empowers them to self-select: "This is me" or "This isn't for me."

Now you understand the responsibility you have.

### **Your real emotional Hook:**

What do you want people to feel first when they encounter your brand?

Not what sounds impressive.

What matches the relief your product provides.

If you solve expensive problems, they should feel relief.

If you provide expertise, they should feel confident.

If you simplify complexity, they should feel smart.

**Emotion drives everything. Find it first.**

## CONCEPT HOOK BRAND LAW

Your **Hook** attracts, delivers, and empowers.

## YOUR CONCEPT HOOK FIELD TEST

**1. Who are you talking to, and what are they feeling?**

Identify who they are and what they feel. Frustrated? Confused? Overwhelmed?

**2. What do you want them to feel when they encounter your brand?**

Relief? Confidence? Vindication? Security?

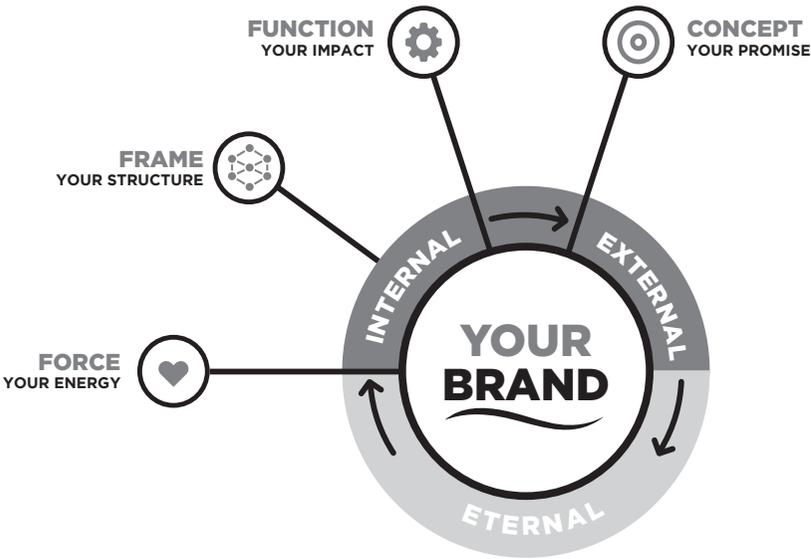
**3. What lasting emotion should your brand leave behind?**

The personal value they defend, retell, and build trust on.

## LESS IS MORE

Most companies chase excitement or inspiration. You found who you're talking to and the emotion that matters, protects careers, and builds trust. Everything else follows from there.





**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
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**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

CHAPTER ELEVEN

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**CONCEPT SENTENCE**



**YOUR BRAND  
HAS ONLY ONE  
SENTENCE TO  
LIVE BY.  
WHAT DOES  
IT SAY?**

This is where your internal brand strategy meets the real world.

Your Sentence isn't hidden in an internal document or buried on your "About" page.

This is your tagline.

Your homepage hero.

Your landing page headline.

The first words people see when they encounter your brand.

Some brands try to say everything and end up saying nothing. They write mission statements for internal meetings, then wonder why their marketing doesn't convert. They craft beautiful brand strategies that never make it to the customer.

Your Sentence is your most important piece of external communication.

**| One Sentence ensures clarity never leaves the room. |**

You know those moments when you feel the pressure to deliver the succinct, ground-breaking message, but you just can't help stumbling over your tongue and back again?

It happens to all of us.

In refereeing rugby, you have so little time to explain a call, unless you want to explain how right you are. If you can't communicate in a straight-forward and easy to understand way, you've lost the players.

It takes preparation. Know what you're going to say, and how you're going to say it.

Use your words.

Make your value clear in one breath, or lose the customer. This is it. Your external value in one Sentence.

**REALITY CHECK:** Consulting Firm

*They've been trying to say who they are for years. In fact, they still struggle with this. From "Business Strategy & Operations," to "Growth Acceleration Partners," to "Performance Optimization Solutions," to "Strategic Implementation Advisors," and back to "Management Consulting & Analytics," then to "Revenue Solutions."*

*If you're a mid-market company and growth has stalled, they diagnose what's actually blocking progress, find bottlenecks in your operations, identify your total addressable market, create executable roadmaps your team can follow, implement systems that stick, and turn strategic plans into measurable results.*

*Calling it a "Complete Go-To-Market Strategy," is consultant wallpaper. Their edge is execution and visibility. They see the market you've been missing and connect you to it.*

*Their line should be: "Find Your Missing Market."*

*Short. Direct. Immediate. Every CEO feels that pain daily. It's invasive.*

*Most consultants would hedge that claim, soften it, and make it less*

*threatening. But that defeats the purpose.*

The brutal truth is this:

**| Paying attention is free. Missing the moment is not. |**

When someone encounters your brand, they're making a split-second decision. Miss that moment, and you've lost more than a customer, you've lost a relationship that could have lasted years. Your Craigslist missed connection. Your one Sentence isn't marketing copy, it's what makes them decide to pay attention.

Think about it. When you meet someone new, you form an opinion in seconds. Maybe less. It may not be accurate, but in your mind, in that moment, it's completely valid. Your one Sentence is your survival strategy.

Don't optimize for impressiveness. Center clarity.

If your goal is to sound sophisticated, comprehensive, and innovative, you end up sounding like everyone else.

**The Sentence Test**

Your first Sentence is what the world sees first. Your external promise.

**Patagonia:** "We're in business to save our home planet."

That's it. Not "We create high-quality outdoor gear for adventure enthusiasts who value sustainability and performance." To understand their tagline, their FORCE was the frustration that business and environmental protection were seen as opposites.

**Slack:** “Where Work Happens.”

Not “We provide enterprise communication solutions that integrate seamlessly with existing workflows.” Their FORCE was the frustration that work communication was scattered, inefficient, and siloed. They make work better. Period.

**Headspace:** “Be kind to your mind.”

Not “We deliver evidence-based mindfulness solutions through accessible digital meditation experiences.” They help you be kind to your mind. Frustration that mental wellness was complicated, clinical, and inaccessible, was their FORCE.

Notice what these taglines have in common? They’re about the customer, not the company. They focus on the outcome, not the process. They use words humans actually say.

Your one Sentence adapts. But your core Sentence expresses differently across touchpoints:

**TAGLINES that capture who you are:**

- Dollar Shave Club: “Great razors for a few bucks a month.”

**HOME PAGE headlines that explain what you deliver:**

- Calendly: “Easy scheduling ahead.”

**LANDING PAGES that promise what they’ll accomplish:**

- Later: “Instagram Influencer Marketing Strategy Guide.”

**ADS that challenge what they think:**

- Blissly: “It’s not a pillowcase. It’s a beauty treatment.”

Same core truth. Different expressions for different moments in the customer journey.

**Most Sentences fail for predictable reasons:**

They're about you, not them: "We are a leading provider of..."  
Nobody cares that you think you're leading.

They list capabilities: "We provide comprehensive solutions including..." Capabilities don't motivate action. Outcomes do.

They use industry jargon: "Leveraging synergistic methodologies..."  
If your grandparents and your kids can't understand it, it's not clear enough.

They try to include everyone: "For businesses of all sizes..." When you're for everyone, you're for no one.

They hedge their bets: "We help enable organizations to potentially..." Confidence is clarity. Wishy-washy language creates wishy-washy results.

**Finding your Sentence:**

**Start with the problem:** What keeps your customers awake at 3:00 am? That's what you solve.

**Focus on the outcome:** What does life look like after they work with you? That's what you deliver.

**Use their language:** How do your best customers describe what you do? Use their words, not yours.

**Test for clarity:** Can someone who's never heard of your industry understand it? If not, simplify.

**Make it decisive:** Choose one thing you do better than anyone else. Own that.

### **The Ripple Effect**

When you nail your one Sentence, everything else gets easier:

- Sales conversations start with the problem you solve, not the services you offer.
- Marketing messages focus on customer outcomes, not company capabilities.
- Hiring decisions attract people who believe in you, not just a paycheck.
- Partnership opportunities align around shared customer value, not shared features.
- Pricing conversations justify value through transformation, not time.
- Your Sentence becomes the filter for every message. Does this support what we promise? If yes, we say it. If no, we don't.

Your brand's one Sentence (whether it's a tagline or a headline), is built on your internal FORCE, FRAME, and FUNCTION.

Everything should be connected.

**Now connect everything.**

## CONCEPT SENTENCE BRAND LAW

Keep clarity in the room with one **Sentence** that solves and delivers.

## YOUR CONCEPT SENTENCE FIELD TEST

- 1. What problem keeps your best customers awake at 3:00 am?**  
Start with their suffering, not your solution.
- 2. Does your sentence make people want to pay attention?**  
Share it with someone who doesn't know your business. Do they ask "Tell me more" or "So what?"
- 3. If you could only do one thing for the rest of your business life, what would it be?**  
That's probably your sentence.

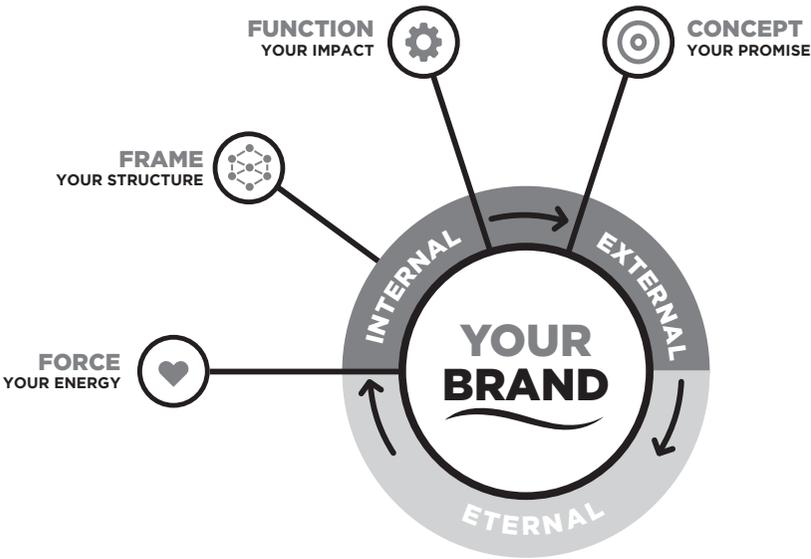
## LESS IS MORE

You eliminated the need to explain everything and started talking about what matters.

Your marketing just invited attention to meet clarity.







**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
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**BRAND** ) **STRING  
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**CHAPTER TWELVE**  
**CONCEPT TODAY**

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**IS YOUR  
MESSAGE  
RELEVANT  
TODAY,  
OR  
YESTERDAY?**

Every brand is haunted by its greatest hits.

Your brand isn't static. Your business isn't the same as it was three years ago. It may not even be the same as it was three months ago.

But your messaging? That's still talking about who you used to be.

This is the curse of successful brands. They find something that works, and stick with it long past its expiration date. It becomes a museum of your former self while your competitors talk about the future.

Museum brands. Beautiful, silent, and empty.

Paid your Blockbuster late fees? Found your Sears credit card?  
Developed your Kodak photos?

Research reveals a stark disconnect: PwC, cited in The Relevance Group report in 2023 that **90% of executives believe their brand is trusted by customers, while only 30% of customers agree.**<sup>12.1</sup> Meanwhile, the EY Global Consumer Report in 2024 shares that **just 12% of consumers feel that brand messaging truly aligns with their values.**<sup>12.2</sup> It shows how brands cling to outdated perceptions of their relevance.

That's not brand consistency. That's brand laziness.

Every industry I've worked in proves this. In refereeing, the game evolves. New laws, new interpretations, new styles of play. If you're still calling the game like it's 2010, you're going nowhere. The best

referees adapt while maintaining their core identity.

Same with being a DJ. You have to read the room and evolve your set while staying true to who you are.

Brands are no different. You evolve.

**| *Your message should make your old self proud.* |**

### **The Evolution Problem**

Most brands evolve accidentally and communicate intentionally. They change what they do but keep saying what they've always said. This creates a gap between promises and reality that customers notice immediately.

It happens because changing your message feels risky. What if customers liked the old version? What if we lose our identity? What if you confuse people?

But your customers already know you've changed. When your message doesn't match their experience, they don't trust either.

Most brands get stuck echoing who they used to be:

"Family-owned since 1985." Most family ownership is irrelevant now.

"Local expertise." When you serve customers nationally.

"Handcrafted quality." When you've scaled through better systems.

These aren't false. They're incomplete truths that miss your current reality.

**Jaguar** just threw away 90 years of British luxury performance for geometric shapes and abstract messaging that could sell anything from NFTs to cold plunges. They were so afraid of looking old that they forgot what made them worth keeping around. Their existing customers feel betrayed, and new customers have no idea why Jaguar exists.

This is what happens when you panic about relevance instead of revolving it. When your message makes your old self proud, you're on the right track.

### **The Message Evolution Success**

**Mailchimp** proves you can evolve without losing your core. They've grown from a simple email tool to a comprehensive marketing platform over 24 years. However, their messaging stayed true to their positioning: Growing with small businesses.

Their smart evolution:

**2009:** "We Make Email Marketing Easy & Fun"

**2013:** "Send Better Email"

**2017:** "Being yourself makes all the difference"

**2021:** "Get down to business and grow sales"

**2025:** "Turn Emails & SMS into Revenue"

What they kept consistent: The focus on accessibility and growth. They never abandoned their "grow with you" promise to chase enterprise messaging (except during the initial Intuit acquisition period around 2021).

The strategic genius: While others target enterprises with high-cost,

high-complexity positioning, Mailchimp captures businesses early and keeps them longer. Lower entry cost, higher lifetime value.

### **The Today Test**

What do you do now that you didn't do three years ago?

What problems do you solve now that you couldn't solve before?

If your messaging doesn't reflect these changes, you're echoing.

Your message should grow with your business. The alternative is becoming irrelevant while trying to stay consistent.

**There's no need to be a tribute band to your former self.**

## CONCEPT TODAY BRAND LAW

Your message **Today** should make your old self proud.

## YOUR CONCEPT TODAY FIELD TEST

**1. What do you do Today that you couldn't (or didn't) do before?**

Make sure your messaging reflects your evolved capabilities.

**2. Who are your customers Today vs. who they were before?**

Update your language to speak to your actual market.

**3. How has your delivery method changed or improved?**

Don't hide improvements behind outdated messaging.

## LESS IS MORE

You stopped being a museum of your former self and started revolving your message with your business. You have become relevant through honest evolution.







**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**EXTERNAL**  
**CONNECT**

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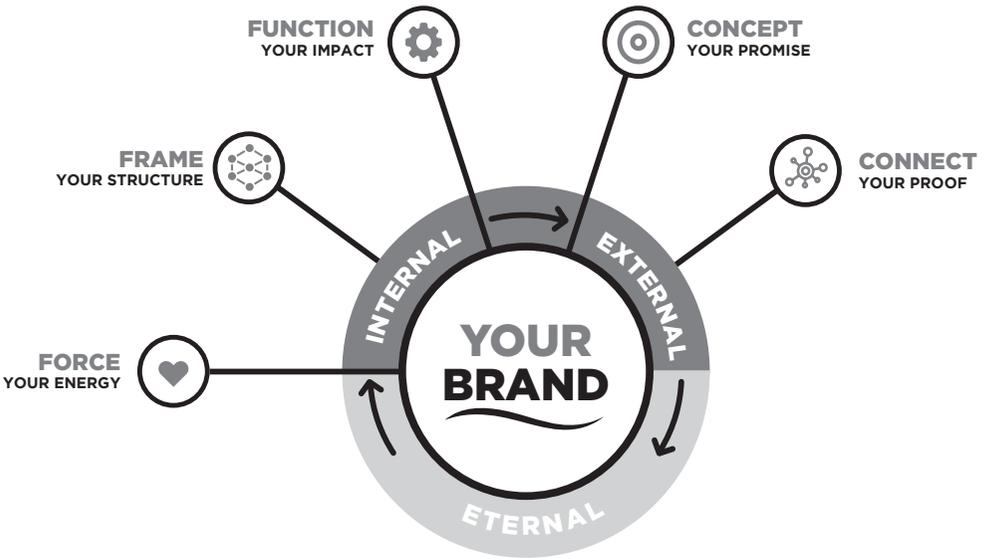


No one falls in love with your brand by accident.

You build it.

Your **CONNECT**.

And leave a mark, not a moment.



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER THIRTEEN**  
**CONNECT BENEFITS**

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**BENEFITS  
SEPARATE  
YOUR BRAND.  
DOES YOUR  
DESIGN  
BACK IT UP?**

Listing Benefits is easy. Making them believable is branding. Your design is the proof that makes them believable.

Every competitor can claim quality, innovation, or customer service. But what specific Benefits do you deliver that others don't, or won't? Those distinctions (what make you unique) only work when your design proves they're real.

Brands often list features and hope customers figure out the Benefits. Smart brands lead with the outcomes that separate them, then use every visual element to reinforce why those Benefits are credible.

When your distinctions align with your design, your Benefits feel honest.

**| Competitors can't copy you because they'd have to become you. |**

**REALITY CHECK:** SPOT Real Estate

*They have a business model that makes sense: Full-service real estate for 1% instead of 3%. Sellers keep \$10,000 more on average. Simple. But nobody believes it.*

*Traditional brokerages have conditioned the market for decades: "You get what you pay for. Low commission means low service." Flat-fee companies proved it, barebones DIY disguised as savings. SPOT is caught between overpriced and underserved, dismissed as either a scam or another discount trap.*

*We rebuilt everything around what sellers are afraid to lose: Their equity. Their time. Not "save money." Equity Protection™ in writing,*

*with their CEO on camera. No sales rep, no corporate filter. A calculator showing dollar savings. A comparison table killing the “what’s the catch” fear. Testimonials with numbers, not feelings. The design makes the Benefit, “For sellers who don’t have time or money to waste,” undeniable before the pitch begins. Traditional brokers can’t copy it. Flat-fee services can’t deliver it.*

*SPOT owns it.*

**Brands that present themselves consistently across various platforms are 3-4 times more likely to achieve strong visibility,**<sup>13</sup>

Renderforest data from 2024 shows.

It’s not just about consistency, it’s about alignment. Too many brands don’t have a style guide problem. They have a fragmentation problem. Their design says one thing. Their tone says another. Their product promises something else entirely.

**United Airlines** promised Benefits like “seamless travel experience” and “friendly service,” with smiling faces of travelers and airline staff. But, the 2017 passenger-dragging incident and their consistent baggage handling issues make those Benefits impossible to believe. They keep cycling through taglines. “Fly the Friendly Skies,” “Connected to the moments that matter,” “Good Leads the Way.” It’s like a cloud came over their Benefits. New messaging can’t restore credibility to promises customers have seen violated.

**Wells Fargo** ensured personalized banking relationships, financial expertise, and homeownership guidance. But their Benefits crumbled under scrutiny. “Personalized service” became fake accounts

opened without permission. "Financial expertise" became selling unnecessary insurance to meet quotas. "Homeownership support" became improper foreclosures. The century-old stagecoach branding seemed more like a hold up and a hold out. When your operations systematically violate your promised Benefits, no design can make them believable.

The fragmentation shows the real cost of misalignment:

Your brand becomes easy to ignore.

Or worse... easy to copy.

### **Visual Alignment = Benefit Clarity**

Your design isn't decoration; it's proof. It makes your difference look real. It makes your positioning feel earned. When a prospect sees your site, touches your packaging, or opens your email, they're asking:

"Do I believe this company can deliver what they claim?"

That's what great design answers.

**Promise a new future?** Look innovative.

**Sell simplicity?** Strip the extras.

**Claim trustworthiness?** Every detail must feel intentional.

**Offer premium?** Your fonts and finish better not be discount.

Because...

**Bad fonts read cheap.**

**Paul Rand** said your font is the silent ambassador of your brand. If

your message says “premium” but your font says “amateur,” you’re forgettable before you even start talking. Every font choice either strengthens your string theory or unravels it.

### **| Always know why you choose a font. |**

Design isn’t just about getting it done, it’s about knowing when it’s ready, when it’s actually good. Does it need further development, or does it need to be pulled back? AI can copy style, but only humans know when the connections are strong enough to matter. Good taste is the difference between a brand that works and a brand that converts.

Good design proves the promise.

Great design makes the promise feel inevitable.

### **Alignment that can’t be copied.**

**Duolingo:** That owl, that cheeky copy, that playful user experience (UX). You can’t copy it without becoming it.

**Barbour:** 130 years of weatherproof expertise shows in every visual element. Their timeless design reinforces durability and heritage without feeling dated. They still hand-manufacture their iconic Bedale and Beaufort jackets in the same Simonside factory, where craftspeople lovingly re-wax and repair customers’ worn jackets by hand. Their website, their stores, their packaging, everything feels like it was built to last generations, not to chase trends. You can’t copy their look without copying their 130-year story.

**Braun:** The German appliance manufacturer makes every button, every line scream German engineering. Their design proves “less but better” isn’t a slogan, it’s a religion. Competitors copy the look, miss the obsession.

These brands use design to show what they stand for. Their Benefits feel inevitable before you even read the copy.

Your brand works the same way.

In rugby, players test the referee’s consistency, not charisma. One call out of alignment with your tone or logic, and authority disappears.

One off-brand moment can undo a lifetime of credibility.

When design, voice, and experience all deliver the same benefit, trust builds before the pitch even starts.

### **The Distinction Test**

Ask yourself: Would someone who only sees your brand visuals know your Benefits?

Can a competitor steal your look without stealing your soul?

Do your materials reinforce your positioning, or not?

Your alignment isn’t about aesthetics.

It’s about whether people believe what you say.

**Turn your separators into visual proof that sells before you speak.**

## CONNECT BENEFITS BRAND LAW

Design makes your **Benefits** impossible to miss.

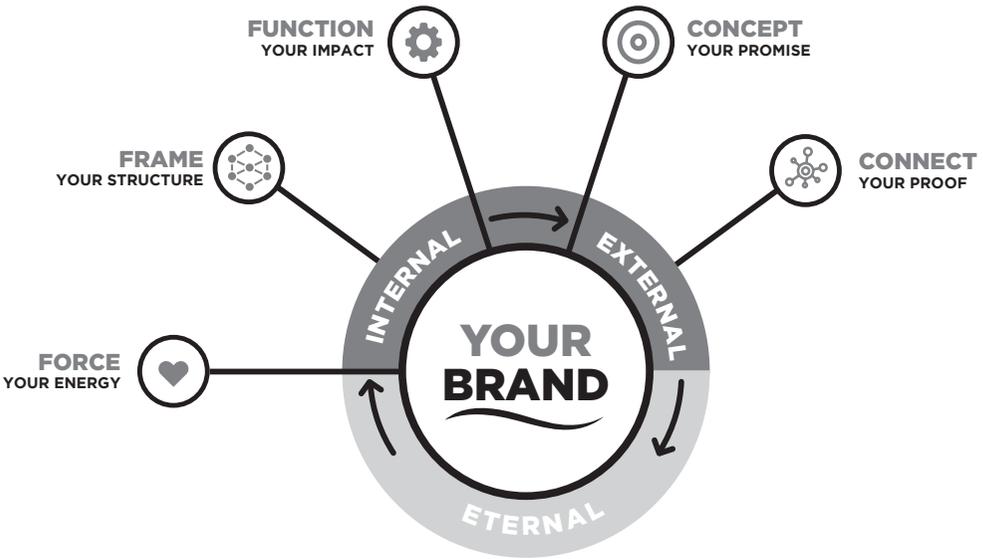
### YOUR CONNECT BENEFITS FIELD TEST

- 1. What Benefits do you deliver that others don't?**  
Identify your true distinctions, not just your features.
- 2. Does your design make those Benefits feel credible and real?**  
Test if your visuals support or undermine your Benefits.
- 3. Would someone who only sees your visuals know your Benefits?**  
Ensure your design communicates your differentiators without explanation.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped hoping customers would figure out your Benefits and started making them visible.  
Your design now works as your sales team 24/7.





**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER FOURTEEN**  
**CONNECT TRUST**

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**ATTENTION.  
TRUST.  
WHERE IS IT,  
AND WHY  
IS IT THERE?**

Sometimes you feel like you're sitting on the wrong side in the interrogation room. It's silent except for the buzz and flicker of a single overhead light.

You're sitting there, drowning in campaign calendars, SEO tricks, social posts, email sequences trying to figure out if somebody's out there. It's all stacked in front of you in a giant evidence box and it smells like a cold case.

So many brands are addicted to "more."  
More channels, more content, more something.

Do you Trust anyone who says, "Trust me?"

Remember that snake Kaa trying to hypnotize Mowgli with "Trust in Me?" The harder you push, the faster people run.

We all have moments where we're overwhelmed. We feel doubt. We second-guess. We think pushing harder is the way to go.

However:

**| The Trust is out there. |**

And they're not strangers.

The evidence is often in plain sight. The strings connect. And you know where your customers Trust you. Where they pay attention without being asked. Where they defend you when you're not in the room.

Your FUNCTION helped you be strategic about where to show up. Your Connect is about shifting your mindset and owning what you already know.

Trust is about focus not frequency.

You don't need to control everything everywhere. You need to own the spaces where customers pay attention.

Think about that for a second. Someone is choosing to Trust YOU, Trust YOUR BRAND. Out of every option in the universe, they're betting on you with their time, their money and their reputation.

That's not marketing. That's a privilege. And most brands treat it like a transaction.

Just another unchecked lead in the case folder.

You know those moments when GPS insists it knows where you're going, rerouting and rerouting? It's the same when your website, your customer service, and your product claims, all contradict one another. Your positioning is off.

Here's what happens when someone Trusts your brand.

They become part of your story. They don't just buy your product or use your service, they become living proof that you're on track.

**REALITY CHECK:** Sports Lighting Company

*One email changed everything. Instead of talking about lumens and specifications, they talked about the kid who makes varsity, the*

*Friday night lights, and the path from high school dreams to college scholarships and beyond. "Inspiring Generations." They didn't sell lighting, they sold the stage where champions are made.*

*Why? They knew who their customers were. Those customers weren't just buying lights. Many of them were parents, with kids competing in sports. Every installation now had a specific meaning. The company became champions for athletic excellence.*

This is what your base camp can look like. Where people have already joined your team.

**HubSpot** owns the marketing conversation through thought leadership content marketing, educating their audience rather than chasing trends.

**YETI** connects with outdoor enthusiasts where they already gather, through social media and sponsored events, making their brand values visible through real user stories.

**Peloton** found the center of their ecosystem at their rider community app, leveraging organic interactions with belonging and competition.

Notice what happened? Each brand found their people and gave them something bigger than a product.

They gave them an identity. A purpose. A reason to exist.

They built Trust.

And Trust will stand with you when it matters.

**Peloton** had the bike, the app, the hype. An obsessed community built around live classes, leaderboards, and an always-on rider ecosystem. During lockdowns, demand spiked. But the strings didn't connect: A hardware-first model, delivery misses, pricing whiplash, and highly public product-safety issues. When gyms reopened, their strategy spiraled between "equipment" and "platform."

Trust requires more than belonging. Peloton optimized engagement until it broke.

**HOKA** proves that when trust is honored, it grows. Two French trail runners built "maximalist" shoes when everyone chased "minimalist." They rose through ultra-runners who became evangelists. They didn't sell rebellion. They sold relief. The downhill obsession became the story. Their Frame was defiance disguised as design. Oversized. Unapologetic. Their Function? Brick-and-mortar dominance as "the primary venue for full-price sales." With 20% year-over-year international growth, they claimed 10% of the U.S. running shoe market through 3,749 retail touchpoints, mostly wholesale partners, with only nine HOKA-owned stores. Retail sales in the U.S. jumped 26.7% while online flatlined at 0.5%. HOKA commoditizes where choice is automated, but grows in physical retail because maximalist cushioning must be experienced to be believed. To be trusted.

Finding your people isn't the finish line. It's the starting line.

Because when they find you, they're saying "This is me." And every decision after that either keeps the promise or breaks it.

**Kicking Horse** doesn't just make great coffee. Every bag is a promise

that this moment matters. That you deserve something extraordinary. That your morning ritual is sacred. Year after year, they deliver on that promise.

That's not customer retention.

That's a relationship revolution.

Your turn.

Stop asking "How do we get more customers?"

Start asking "How do we build something worth defending?"

**| *An ounce of Trust beats a ton of marketing.* |**

Because when you have that, marketing becomes less necessary.

They do it for you.

Trust isn't born, it's grown.

Every interaction either deepens the relationship or weakens it. Every touchpoint either proves you're worthy of their Trust or shows you're taking it for granted.

As a referee, I learned that Trust is built one call at a time. Every action has to be backed by what you say. One inconsistent moment can destroy a game and your reputation.

Your job isn't to be everywhere.

**It's to be where you can be everything to someone.**

## CONNECT TRUST BRAND LAW

**Trust** is out there, but not everywhere.

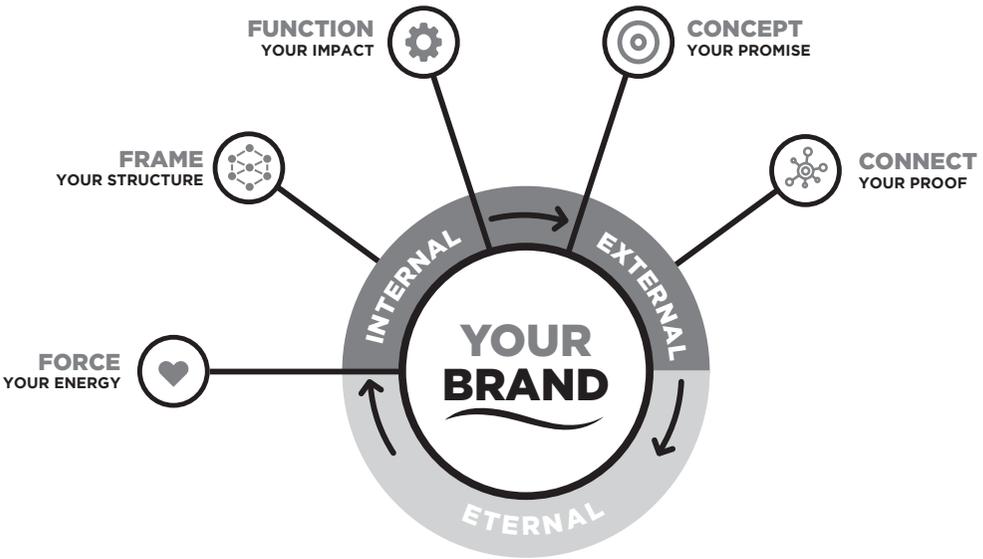
### YOUR CONNECT TRUST FIELD TEST

- 1. Where do your customers already Trust you?**  
Stop looking everywhere and own the spaces where Trust already exists.
- 2. What evidence are you ignoring in the data?**  
Analytics, emails, and research show you where Trust lives.
- 3. Which relationships feel like transactions vs. privileges?**  
The ones that feel like privileges are where real Trust exists.

### LESS IS MORE

Instead of pushing "Trust me!" you discovered where trust lives. You stopped being overwhelmed by trying to be everywhere and started focusing where customers pay attention.





**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER FIFTEEN**  
**CONNECT JEALOUSY**

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**WHAT BRAND  
SPARKS  
JEALOUSY  
(IN A GOOD  
WAY)?**

Jealousy gets a bad rap, but it's actually insight in disguise.

It's a map to a better future.

When you see another brand and think, "Damn, I wish we'd thought of that," pay attention. That feeling isn't weakness, it's your brand instincts telling you something important about what's possible.

But here's what most people get wrong. They think "Jealousy" means "copying." It doesn't. Jealousy reveals gaps in your own brand expression that you didn't know existed or chose to ignore.

Looking at competitors isn't just about features; it's emotional.

GWJ research shows that **one in five of the global consumer population are aspirational, constantly looking for brands that go beyond the transaction to create something worth talking about.**<sup>14</sup> That's more than a billion people.

Jealousy reveals what your brand might be holding back.

**| Jealousy is your competitive intelligence. |**

**The three types of brand Jealousy:**

**Execution Jealousy:** "I wish we'd done that first."

This is about tactics, their campaign, their design, their messaging approach, their products, their service, and their technology. It's the most common but least useful type.

**Strategic Jealousy:** "I wish we had their positioning."

You're not jealous of what they made, but where they chose to compete. They found a space you didn't see or have the courage to claim.

**Cultural Jealousy:** "I wish we had their confidence."

This is the most valuable type. You're envious of their organizational courage. How they show up, take risks, and own their choices. Often without apologizing.

You might be jealous of how music producer **Rick Rubin** knows what feels right. He doesn't play instruments and has limited skills in the studio, but artists want him in the room. That's taste. Knowing when something's ready, when to develop it further, and when to pull back.

AI is a great example. It generates options, accelerates workflows, and spots patterns humans miss. But it can't decide when the work is done. It can copy style, but only humans know when the connections are strong enough to matter. That discernment is what you're really jealous of. The confidence to trust what feels right.

Or you're jealous of how **Liquid Death** takes absurd creative risks that could completely backfire, but they do it anyway. You're not jealous of their water product. You're jealous of their willingness to be completely ridiculous and own it.

Or that **Netflix** killed their own DVD business to build streaming, even though DVDs were still profitable. You're jealous of their courage to cannibalize success for growth. This Jealousy reveals where you're playing it safe when you could be playing to win.

I learned this running nightclubs. You see what works elsewhere and think you can just transplant it. We have all taken a “mockingbird” brand approach because we’re jealous. But tactics don’t transfer, conviction does. The courage to own your approach is what matters. Always.

### **REALITY CHECK: Industrial Safety Equipment**

*They were jealous of competitors who seemed to effortlessly communicate Benefits while they got stuck explaining technical specs. But when we dug deeper, they weren’t jealous of their competitors’ products. They envied how competitors made safety sound urgent, not optional.*

*We repositioned them through a campaign that said:*

*“Safety isn’t expensive, it’s priceless.”*

*“Safety doesn’t happen by accident.”*

*“Safety risk isn’t worth it.”*

*“Safety is an investment that returns.”*

*Instead of battling on specs, they made safety the only thing that mattered. Safety became the reason to choose, not a bullet point to explain. Now competitors are jealous.*

### **Jealousy Reveal**

Most Jealousy reveals internal limitations, not external opportunities. You’re not jealous of what they built, you’re jealous of their willingness to build it despite criticism, risk, and the possibility of failure.

Here’s a real example: When Apple Music entered streaming in 2015,

**Spotify** didn't try to outspend them. Apple had deeper pockets and iPhone integration, but Spotify stuck to what made them different. Apple focused on exclusives and artist deals, and banked on their ecosystem. Spotify worked everywhere. Android, web, smart speakers, your car. And they stuck to their algorithm that learned what you liked and let you share what you discovered. Today they have more than double the subscribers that Apple has globally.

Five brands that inspire productive Jealousy:

**Monocle:** A global media brand that blends high taste, sharp design, and cultural intelligence without feeling elitist. They make sophistication feel accessible. "Read More. Live Better." What's Jealousy-worthy? Their permission to be both intelligent and approachable.

**Reformation:** Built a fashion brand that started by retailoring vintage clothing and evolved into a stylish, ethical, and wildly desired brand, without compromising its tone or values. They proved you don't have to choose between profitability and principles. What's Jealousy-worthy? Their refusal to compromise their values for growth.

**Bumble:** Reinvented dating with a female-first approach and turned UX into a lifestyle movement. They showed how functional innovation can become cultural leadership. What's Jealousy-worthy? Their willingness to challenge social assumptions everyone else accepted.

**Nando's:** The South African chicken chain said no to frozen fast food. Nando's chicken is fresh, marinated for 24 hours, and flame-grilled. Now peri-peri, a typically African hot sauce, is global because

real beats convenient. What's Jealousy-worthy? No compromise on fresh when frozen is easy.

**Hello Kitty:** Designer Yuko Shimizu created a character without a mouth in 1974, letting people project their own emotions onto the blank face. To "speak from the heart." What's Jealousy-worthy? The conviction that restraint creates connection when the whole industry designs for explicit expression.

**Get a mirror.**

What you admire in other brands reflects what you want to express in your own.

If you're jealous of:

**Boldness.** You're probably playing it too safe.

**Clarity.** You're probably overcomplicating things.

**Consistency.** You're probably fragmented across touchpoints.

**Confidence.** You're probably hedging your positioning.

**Community.** You're probably transactional instead of relational.

**Permission.** You're probably asking for approval instead of taking action.

**| Jealousy is diagnostic. It shows you where your brand could grow. |**

Smart brands give themselves permission to:

Say no to opportunities that don't fit.

Charge what they're worth.

Stand for something specific.

Risk alienating people who aren't their customers anyway.

Be remarkable instead of safe.

Make decisions based on their principles, not their fears.  
You're not jealous of their success. You're jealous of their certainty.

**Give yourself permission to turn jealousy into action.**

Build something they'd search for if it went missing.

## CONNECT JEALOUSY BRAND LAW

Use **Jealousy** as competitive and strategic intelligence.

### YOUR CONNECT JEALOUSY FIELD TEST

- 1. What brands make you think, "I wish we'd thought of that?"**  
Identify what you actually admire to understand your own aspirations.
- 2. What specific elements of their success could you adapt to your brand?**  
Study the structure and principles, not just the style.
- 3. What would you attempt if you had their level of confidence?**  
Use their boldness to examine your own self-imposed limitations.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped seeing other brands as threats and started using them as teachers. You eliminated the fear of being influenced and started being intentional about what influences you.







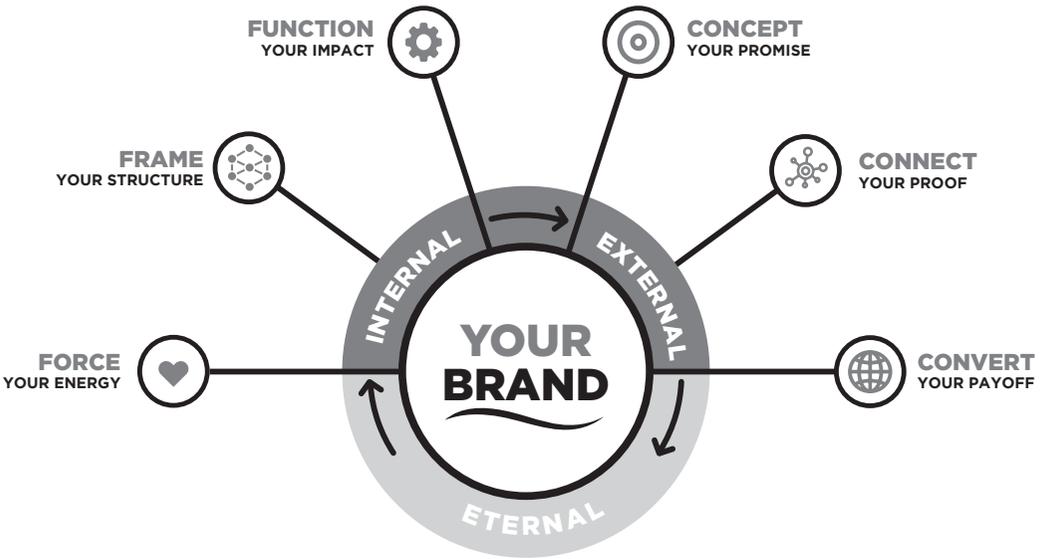
**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**EXTERNAL  
CONVERT**

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Strangely, not everyone says yes.  
You build it.  
Your CONVERT.  
To make commitment feel natural.



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER SIXTEEN**  
**CONVERT COMMITMENT**

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**THERE'S  
COMMITMENT.  
WHAT  
HAPPENS  
NEXT?**

Calling all call-to-actions.

Do we love buttons? Or do we hate buttons?

We've all clicked buttons that have made our day, week, month and year. And clicked ones that have taken us to meet the dark rabbit Frank.

It can be frustrating. Even more so when you're the one needing them to convert.

I have a test for your button, your text link, your call-to-action (CTA, as it's commonly referred to). The test works. And it will stick in your mind forever.

First, consider this: Your CTA is often the first thing people read.

Why? Because you've been told to make it stand out! Use contrasting colors, place it above the fold, bottom right, and so forth. So yes, it's often read even before the headline. And that makes it even more critical.

Back to my test.

### **The COMMITMENT ISOLATION TEST™**

Look at your layout or design. You may have six elements on your homepage hero section, landing page, or ad.

Let's say it's a website. You may have eyebrow copy, a headline, a content section, an image, and social proof.

**Keep your button visible and remove everything else except one element.**

**Test each of these:**

Headline + CTA

Eyebrow copy + CTA

Image + CTA

Content copy + CTA

Social proof + CTA

Your CTA should make sense with every single element.

Does it tell people exactly what to do?

And more importantly, what they'll get?

For all of the above to work, your CTA should also work as a standalone. So, when you move everything except your CTA, where does it leave the user?

"Learn More?" Okay.

"Contact Us?" Why?.

"Get Started?" With what?

If your CTA can't stand on its own, it's weak. If it only works in full context, it means that when someone scans your page (which is how most people read), your CTA has lost its power.

Strong CTAs pass **The Commitment Isolation Test™**:

They work with every element independently.

They work completely alone.

They show two-way commitment.

They promise an outcome, not a process.

It's a Commitment.

The term "CTA" is so overused it's lost its value for me.

Look at it this way: It's a Commitment from them to you. Everyone agrees. But more importantly, it's a Commitment from you to them.

To the user, your customer.

**| Commitment works both ways. |**

If you know what to do, then they know what to do.

**REALITY CHECK:** Software Development Company

*Their website talked about "Top-Rated Development Partner," "Hire Top Developers," "Proven Talent," "Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed!" And the Commitment? "Get a Free Strategy Call." Does it make sense because most calls in their industry cost something?*

*There's no Commitment being delivered to potential clients.*

*We led with "79.2% of Websites Run on PHP." (I didn't know that, and my sports software runs on PHP, the programming language.)*

*We developed the concept of PRECISION PHP™. Their proprietary methodology, which positioned them as established experts.*

*The Commitment was "Let's Talk PHP Business."*

*If a “buyer” is still undecided, (“in flux”), then there’s a DISCOVERY button, that delivers a Free PRECISION PHP™ Guide PDF. Nurturing content before they’re ready to commit.*

*The result is that they now own their Commitment to customers as experts that will deliver.*

According to multiple studies, **personalized CTAs perform 202% better than basic ones.**<sup>15</sup> People don’t need persuasion; they need precision. One clear action, clearly stated, and backed by your Commitment to the customer, makes the difference.

### **What makes a Commitment work?**

**Specificity over generic:** Don’t tell them what you do. Tell them what they’re protecting. Don’t offer a service. Offer a shield.

That’s what a real Commitment looks like. It doesn’t just tell them what to do. It tells them what they’re protecting, what they’re avoiding, and why it matters.

Your Commitment should connect to your FORCE. When it does, it’s not just an instruction... it’s a promise that only you can make.

### **| Think outcome over process. Authority over accessibility. |**

Look at Commitments that get this right:

“Let’s Talk PHP Business” positions them as business strategists, not just developers. That’s authority, not accessibility.

**MasterClass:** “Contact Us” would be accessibility. “Learn from the Best” is authority. You’re not reaching out, you’re accessing mastery.

**Duolingo:** “Start Learning” would be process. “Become Fluent” is outcome. You’re not doing lessons, you’re transforming into someone who speaks another language.

Notice how each Commitment reflects what the company stands for? That’s no accident.

Process tells them what to do. Outcome tells them what they’ll become. Accessibility makes you available. Authority makes you essential.

Your Commitment isn’t about getting clicks. It’s about giving clear direction to people who are ready to move forward.

**Your button is a Commitment that you need to keep.**

## CONVERT COMMITMENT BRAND LAW

**Commitment** works both ways.

### YOUR CONVERT COMMITMENT FIELD TEST

**1. Do you pass the Commitment Isolation Test™?**

If your Commitment can't stand with each element, or alone, it's broken.

**2. Is it a two-way promise or just asking for clicks?**

Real Commitments work both ways: From them to you, and you to them.

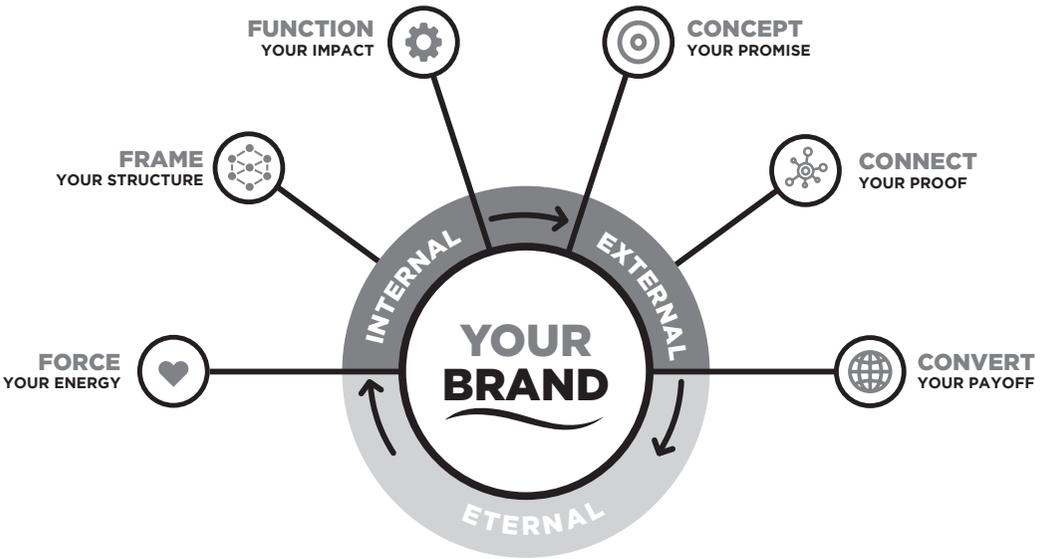
**3. Does it show outcome over process, authority over accessibility?**

"Contact Us" is accessibility. "Talk to the Experts" is authority. "Start Learning" is process. "Become Fluent" is outcome.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped asking for clicks and started making promises you can deliver on. Your Commitment now builds Trust instead of just traffic.





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THEORY™**

**CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**  
**CONVERT EXCUSE**

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**WHY THE  
EXCUSE,  
THE  
HESITATION?**

Should I?

The Baymard Institute found that **70.19% of online carts are abandoned**,<sup>16</sup> most often due to unclear next steps, hidden costs, or poor mobile user experience (UX). Even tiny blockers kill conversion momentum.

You think it's price. It's usually process.

You think it's competition. It's usually confusion.

You think it's trust. It's usually unintentional friction.

The biggest conversion killer isn't objection. It's hesitation.

**| When people hesitate, they're mostly gone. Mostly. |**

I learned this as a DJ playing 10-hour sets. The moment the energy drops, people head to the bar... or worse, they head home. You don't get them back by playing the same song louder. You get them back by removing whatever caused the energy drop in the first place.

Don't blame the DJ. Fix the floor.

Conversion works the same way: Find the energy drop. Fix it.

**REALITY CHECK:** Architectural Manufacturer Strategy

*They wanted to expand their reach with architects but faced a credibility obstacle. Their Commitment had to be preceded by DISCOVERY, "Register for Webinar," with a supporting line: "Systems for Technical Spaces." The obstacle wasn't interest, architects need proof of expertise first. The webinar provided continuing education*

*while positioning them as experts across the industry. They promoted it through LinkedIn and industry channels to establish authority. But there was a second obstacle: Their webinar registration form asked for company size, project types, budget, timeline, and technical specifications. By question three, architects felt like they were in a deposition.*

*We stripped it down to three fields: Name, email, and "What type of spaces do you design?" Webinar registration rates jumped.*

*Same company, same expertise, different approach that eliminated both the "prove it" barrier and the "interrogation" barrier while building their expert reputation.*

That's the pattern. Find the hesitation, remove the friction. Here's how others do it:

**Loom:** Their Commitment is literally "Record a Video." Their commitment is action: Hit record fast on a free plan. No Commitment obstacles.

**Typeform:** They make complex sign-ups feel like conversations, not interrogations. Information gathering becomes engagement.

**Chewy:** Reordering pet food is one-click because they know when you'll run out. Timing obstacles eliminated.

### **What they're really thinking...**

Your prospects are in three states simultaneously:

**In Market:** They're actively looking. Something pushed them to search. But what are they really worried about? Price? Quality?

Integration? Results? Address the worry, don't avoid it.

**Calendly** proves you're not alone in switching. 20 million people already made this exact decision. You're not the guinea pig, you're joining the majority.

**In Flux:** They want to solve this, but when? Today? Next quarter? They need to know what happens if they wait vs. what happens if they move now. Give them a reason to act, not just information to consider.

**Slack** removes the timing pressure completely. No contracts, no credit cards, no IT approval needed. You can test it with your team this afternoon and kill it tomorrow if it doesn't work.

**In Doubt:** They're either not really interested, not ready, or they've been burned before. Everyone has. What do they need to believe that you're different? Not everything you want to tell them. Just what they need to feel confident. The smallest possible Commitment wins. Don't ask for marriage on the first date. What's the lowest-risk way to start?

**Shopify:** "Get 3 days free, then 3 months for \$1/month." They know you've been burned by platform costs before. So they give you three days to test everything, then three months to build your business for basically nothing. By month four, you're either making money or you're out three dollars. (plus tax).

That's the difference between understanding their state and honestly addressing it.

## Inside B2B

**Reality:** Your biggest competitor isn't another company. It's the status quo. It's "We'll think about it." It's "Maybe next quarter."

Because if they have to work to give you money, they'll find someone who makes it easier.

**Mobile:** Most B2B buyers use mobile during their research, and mobile now influences over 40% of revenue in leading companies, but most B2B sites still assume desktop decisions.

**Politics:** Decision-making politics. Your buyer needs to sell you internally. Give them the tools that make them the expert in the room.

**Costs:** Not your price, but their cost of integration. What does implementation actually look like? How long until they see results? Answer these before they ask.

**Vendors:** They may be locked in a contract already. Give them ammunition to switch when it expires, or tools to bring you in alongside existing vendors.

But here's what most brands miss about hesitation. It's not just killing your conversions; it's also killing your progress.

Wrong action beats perfect inaction.

You'll learn more in one week of real customer feedback than six months of internal meetings about your tagline.

Every day you hesitate, someone else is building momentum.

You can edit something until the world runs out of ink. Test while others debate fonts.

The market teaches faster than your meetings. Take action and avoid terminal analysis.

### **The Attack**

Find the energy drop. Fix the floor. Don't add more persuasion. Remove unnecessary friction. The goal isn't to convince harder, it's to make deciding easier.

As a referee, I learned that players test your consistency, not your personality. One inconsistent call casts doubt about every future decision. Same with conversion processes. One confusing step creates doubt about everything else.

Stop fighting for attention.

**Start removing hesitation.**

## CONVERT EXCUSE BRAND LAW

Remove the **Excuse**. Earn the Commitment.

### YOUR CONVERT EXCUSE FIELD TEST

**1. What's making them hesitate right now?**

Map the actual problem points, not the assumed ones.

**2. What's the smallest possible COMMITMENT you can ask for?**

Don't ask for marriage on the first interaction.

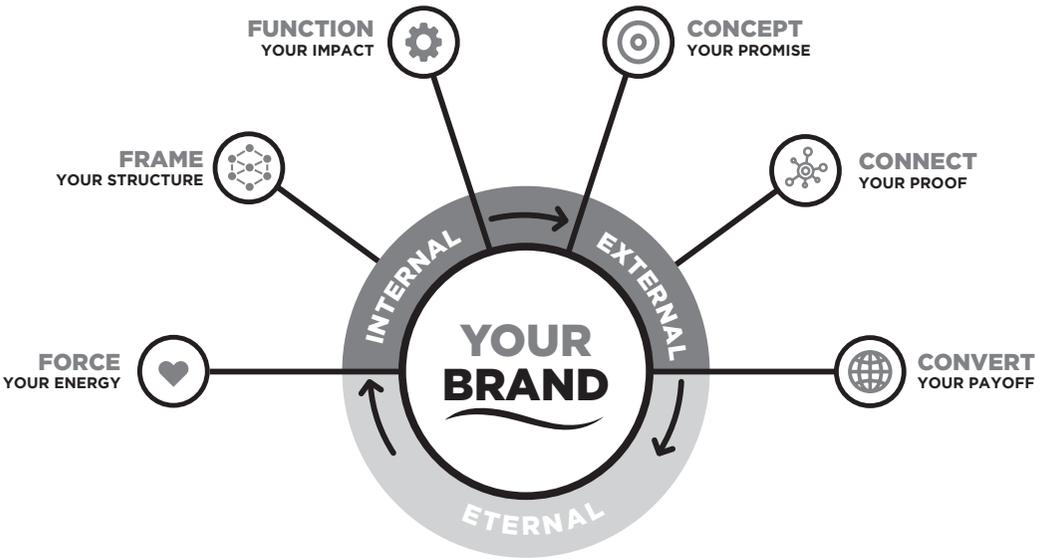
**3. What do they need to believe to move forward?**

Address their worry, don't avoid it.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped trying to convince and started making it easier for them to decide. Bad friction and persuasion eliminated. Your opportunity to CONVERT is now ready.





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**THEORY™**

**CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**  
**CONVERT FUTURE**

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**WHEN THEY  
SAY YES TO  
THEIR FUTURE,  
WHAT  
CHANGES?**

When someone makes a Commitment to you, what changes in their world?

That's not a marketing question. That's a vision question.

**| Don't sell clicks. Sell the change. |**

Running nightclubs, the goal wasn't getting people through the door; it was creating an experience they'd talk about for the rest of their lives. The entrance fee was just access. The real value was transformation. For hours, you weren't stuck in your cubicle mindset or your daily grind. You were part of something bigger.

Your brand works like that. The Commitment is just access. The transformation is what they really bought.

**REALITY CHECK: Marketing Platform**

*Their Commitment was "Sign Up Free." A 14-day trial. "Because everyone can learn a marketing platform in 14 days," said no one. So, you wonder, what's the vision? What changes when someone commits to their platform? Their vision should be: "Build Your Business. 30 Days Free." Small businesses don't sign up for email marketing. They commit to growing their customer relationships, increasing sales, and building something sustainable.*

*The Commitment is about the platform. The vision is about their Future. When the two align, the 30 days becomes about building something meaningful.*

And, **30-day trials convert 273% more than 14-day trials** according to Techround.<sup>17</sup> It's not about more clicks, it's about more traction in the right direction.

But here's what brands miss: Every Commitment should ladder up to something bigger. Not just for you. For them.

### **The Change Ladder**

- **24 hours:** What feels different tomorrow?
- **30 days:** What gets easier or starts working?
- **12 months:** What becomes possible?

If you can't answer that for them, you're just optimizing for traffic, not transformation.

Look at brands that connect Commitment to vision:

**LinkedIn:** Profile today. Bigger network tomorrow. Career change down the line.

**Hims & Hers:** Fix the problem today. Build confidence tomorrow. Feel like yourself again.

**Kit (formerly ConvertKit):** Sign up, build an audience, eventually buy your own freedom.

Every Commitment should make the next step easier because the hard work shouldn't start after they commit.

### **The Commitment Reality**

Clicks are stats.

Commitment is compound interest.

Don't let every yes be just another transaction.

Attach every Commitment to the transformation it enables.

If people don't see what they become tomorrow, next month, a year from now, they're just passing through.

**Sell the change that's needed.**

Because people don't search for transactions. They search for transformations that matter.

## CONVERT FUTURE BRAND LAW

For every Commitment, sell the change and the **Future**.

## YOUR CONVERT FUTURE FIELD TEST

- 1. What's different for them tomorrow after they say yes?**  
If you can't name it, they can't feel it.
- 2. What happens if they stick with you for longer?**  
The growth must be obvious.
- 3. Does each Commitment make the next one easier?**  
Build momentum through relationship progression.

## LESS IS MORE

You stopped optimizing for transactions and started designing for change. Your conversions now build relationships worth keeping.  
Your growth just became predictable instead of random.



# BRAND ) STRING THEORY™

## EXTERNAL CASE STUDY DYSON

Dyson started with rage. Sick of vacuum bags and loss of suction. 5,127 prototypes later, they engineered the answer. Cyclone technology that worked. That obsession became their FORCE: Engineering that reinvents how we live.

That engineering went into hair dryers that don't fry, air purifiers that show what you're breathing, and bladeless fans. Each category with the same FRAME: It works or doesn't ship. And a genius move? Stealing Apple's retail playbook. 450 demo stores worldwide where you experience before buying. Touch the \$600 hair dryer. While competitors hid in big-box stores, Dyson built engineering temples.

With 27% US market share, they proved that perfect products beat perfect service. Their CONVERT fails. One-way promises, nightmare support, impossible repairs. People still buy. Imagine if they fixed aftercare.

What works. The Dyson Brand String Theory Analysis.

# DYSON INTERNAL

FORCE		
WORTH (THEN)	✓	Vacuums use bags, lose power and suction. Fix it.
WORTH (NOW)	✓	Household appliances deserve the best engineering.
CHANGE	✓	Fighting everyday inferior products.
DISAPPEARED	✓	The world's trusted partner in new appliance tech.
FRAME		
BELIEF	✓	Works or doesn't ship. 5,127 prototypes.
PRINCIPLE	✓	Engineering first, no compromise.
FORGED	✓	It just works better.
FUNCTION		
SHOWS	✓	Premium placement, where it matters.
WORKS	✓	Creates loyal customers, behavior changes.
FRICITION	✗	Impossible repairs and no support.

# DYSON EXTERNAL

CONCEPT		
HOOK	✓	Superior engineering that works.
SENTENCE	✓	Engineering that solves real problems.
TODAY	✓	Constantly evolving: Air, hair, climate, + more.
CONNECT		
BENEFITS	✓	Educational storytelling Teach, not sell.
TRUST	✓	Digital, social, retail demo stores.
JEALOUSY	✓	Copied Apple's retail playbook.
CONVERT		
COMMITMENT	✗	One-way sale, no promise back.
EXCUSE	✗	High price.
FUTURE	✓	Transformation to high end, high tech.

# WORKING BRAND LAWS UNDER PRESSURE

Brand success through the Brand String Theory lens.

## **STANLEY: A Century of Brand Laws Tested in One Viral Moment**

Stanley made thermoses for a century. Blue collar. Utilitarian. Besides keeping contents piping hot or icy cold, their external hook was “It Will Not Break.”

In 2016, they launched the Adventure Quencher. Another industrial tool. A 40oz tumbler for jobsites. Nobody cared. It bombed. Retailers dumped it. By 2019, Stanley had all but given up. The Quencher was silently disappearing.

Then The Buy Guide resurrected it. This shopping blog convinced influencer Emily Maynard Johnson to post about the forgotten tumbler. One Instagram post changed everything.

Stanley saw the numbers. The Buy Guide had sold 5,000 units fast. Comments flooded in. Consumers wanted colors. They wanted it as an accessory, not a tool. Stanley bet everything on transformation. Hired Terence Reilly from Crocs. New colors dropped. Limited editions. Scarcity releases. Social media exploded.

Same engineering. Revolutionary positioning. Stanley’s century-old foundation could support complete lifestyle transformation. The Quencher exploded Stanley from \$70M to \$750M.

# STANLEY INTERNAL

FORCE		
WORTH	✓	Everyone deserve status and respect.
CHANGE	✓	Premium, durable gear is for everyone.
DISAPPEARED	✓	Industrial tools as status symbols would be gone.
FRAME		
BELIEF	✓	If it breaks, we didn't engineer it.
PRINCIPLE	✓	Build once, buy once, lasts forever.
FORGED	✓	"Unbreakable" as the Forged identity.
FUNCTION		
POSITION	✓	Proven in extreme environments.
WORKS	✓	Creates trust and belonging.
FRICTION	✓	Premium pricing justified by lifetime value.

# STANLEY EXTERNAL (BEFORE/AFTER)

CONCEPT		
HOOK	Durability you can trust.	Belonging made visible.
SENTENCE	"It Will Not Break."	Proof that toughness belongs everywhere.
TODAY	Industrial utility.	Lifestyle status with industrial backbone.
CONNECT		
BENEFITS	Survives jobsites.	Built for abuse and carried for status.
TRUST	On the worksite.	In social culture.
JEALOUSY	Only on worksite.	Now in lifestyle.
CONVERT		
COMMITMENT	Buy once, keep forever.	More than a purchase, a lifetime of trust.
EXCUSE	Premium justified by durability.	Premium justified by cultural identity.
FUTURE	Always a work tool.	Built for life - built for style.

## **QUICK CASE STUDY: NETFLIX | THE PASSWORD CRACKDOWN**

Netflix built their business eliminating intermediaries. They took on Blockbuster, scheduled TV, and cable gatekeepers, delivering customer access to content.

By 2019, password sharing had created a new barrier... Account owners sharing access with others. Netflix had to choose: Ignore their founding principle or enforce household boundaries. They stayed true to their foundation. Every household deserves direct access, not borrowed access.

What stood firm for NETFLIX was their FRAME.

**BELIEF:** Customer meets content (eliminate all barriers).

**PRINCIPLE:** One subscription. Full access.

**FORGED:** Control your entertainment schedule.

So when they tackled the issue, their yes/no machine, and their principle were there for their EXTERNAL campaign.

**CONCEPT:** "Your Netflix account is for you and the people you live with, your household."

**CONNECT:** Clear household boundaries protect your viewing control.

**CONVERT:** Simple options, transfer profiles, buy extra member, start your own account.

**RESULT:** 19M new subscribers. Their internal engine drove external success by staying consistent across 25 years.

## **QUICK CASE STUDY: DUOLINGO | THE CHAOTIC OWL**

Duolingo was founded to break elitism in education. Language learning had been locked behind schools, tuition, and expensive software, like Rosetta Stone. They delivered free access to anyone with a phone.

By 2020, the problem wasn't access, it was attention. Millions downloaded the app but dropped off quickly. Then the streak reminders became memes. Users turned the owl into a chaotic, obsessive character. Duolingo had to choose to make the meme theirs.

They stayed true to their foundation: Education should be free, fun, and rewarding. DUOLINGO's FRAME did the work.

**BELIEF:** Education is a right, not a privilege.

**PRINCIPLE:** Learning feels like play.

**ONE THING:** Don't study, play and learn every day.

So when the memes became their identity, their yes/no machine and their principle were there for their EXTERNAL campaign.

**CONCEPT:** The streak is the game. Keep it alive.

**CONNECT:** The owl became the cultural magnet. Chaotic, funny, unforgettable.

**CONVERT:** Users didn't just learn; they showed up daily, obsessed with streaks, turning free play into paid subscriptions.

**RESULT:** Duolingo doubled daily active users and became the most downloaded education app in the world. Their internal engine drove external success by staying consistent: Learning as play, amplified by culture.



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

What you're really here to do.

**EXTERNAL**

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**RECKONING**  
**RECOGNIZE**  
**RELEASE**



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**ETERNAL**  
**RECKONING**

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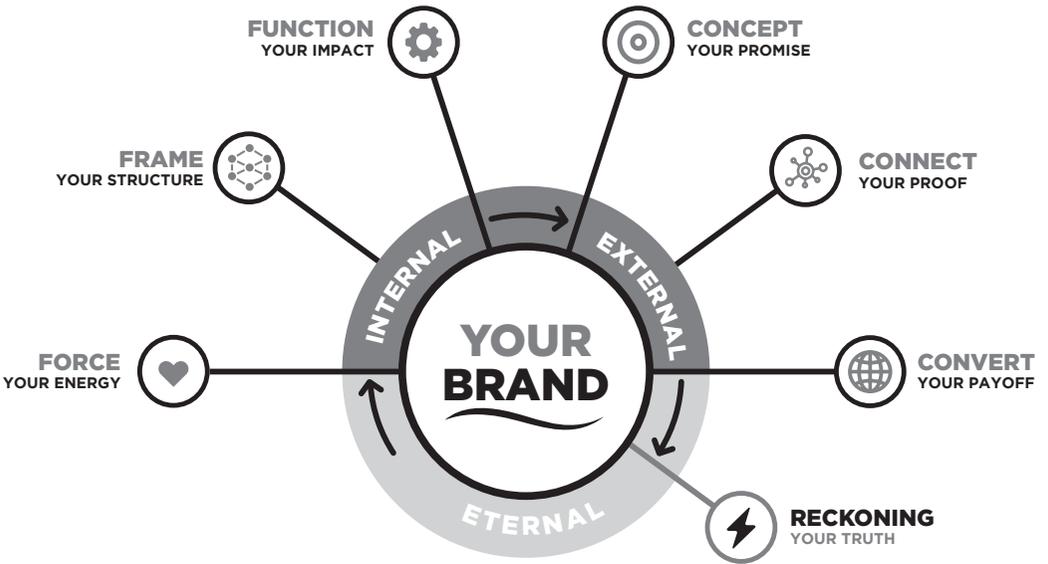


Unbelievably, we often settle for “good enough.”

You build it.

Your RECKONING.

It’s who you are when it matters most.



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**THEORY™**

CHAPTER NINETEEN  
**RECKONING TRUTH**

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**DO YOU KNOW  
THE TRUTH,  
BUT HAVEN'T  
TOLD ANYONE?**

The truth.

You've built your FORCE, designed your FRAME, defined your FUNCTION, clarified your CONCEPT, perfected your CONNECT, and optimized your CONVERT.

But, do you trust yourself to always tell the truth?

You know what you want to be known for. You've always known. But you've been too scared, too professional, too responsible to say it.

"Good enough" gets you nowhere.

Your secret brand ambition isn't to have more ambition. It's not a nice-to-have. It's not a someday dream. It's the only thing standing between building a forgettable business and one that matters.

Every legendary brand started by saying what others were afraid to admit.

A 2025 Science Direct published that **brands with bold public stances (even polarizing ones) gained 29% more organic traffic and 2x higher brand recall.**<sup>18</sup> Playing it safe can be "good enough," but it's risky.

So, just between us: Say it! And say it out loud.

**| Your secret ambition is your strategy. |**

**Are you lying for attention?**

I've worked with so many brands, and they all have the same disease. You do all the work, and then you second guess yourself, your team, and you're back to where you started. It's terminal safety syndrome.

The symptoms? You doubt yourself and return to generic messaging. Safe positioning that offends and excites no one. Corporate jargon that says nothing. And the bottleneck is back. The prognosis is forgettable.

And it's dangerous. You can fall into the trap of saying something that is not fundamentally true. If you don't have your INTERNAL FORCE, FRAME, and FUNCTION consistently aligned, with solid beliefs and principles, to deliver your EXTERNAL CONCEPT, CONNECT and CONVERT, then the face that you show the world is not the truth.

You know what you really want to be known for, but you're back to dressing it up in corporate speak until it sounds like everyone else. You settle for "good enough" when you could own something.

The accounting firm that wants to be "the CFO that makes other CFOs obsolete" but calls themselves "trusted business advisors."

You're back in the crowd that are playing that way. The many that have settled for good enough.

### **The Committee Problem**

Brands operate like a four-person committee making every decision. The CEO wants to be bold. The marketing director wants to be safe. The sales team wants to please everyone. Legal wants you to say nothing.

Result? “Good enough” systems and messaging that nobody remembers. You know what nobody in that committee did? The work you just did.

The best brands kill the committee and say what they mean.

## **The Ambition Categories**

### **Category 1: Industry Annihilation**

You don’t want to compete. You want to make the entire industry obsolete. **Uber:** “We’re not improving taxis. We’re eliminating them.”

### **Category 2: Cultural Revolution**

You want to change how people think, not just what they buy.

**Chobani:** “We’re not making yogurt. We’re proving business can be a force for good.”

### **Category 3: Human Transformation**

You want to change who your customers become, not just what they have. **CrossFit:** “We don’t sell gym memberships. We forge warriors.”

## **REALITY CHECK: Benetton - Truth without foundation**

*In the 90s, they didn’t whisper about “heritage” or “Italian quality.” They threw their sweaters into the background and shoved hard truths into the spotlight. “United Colors” was AIDS patients in hospital beds. Death row inmates staring back at you. Newborn babies fresh from the womb. Racism, war, inequality, photographed, printed, and plastered across billboards.*

*Benetton showed their RECKONING but never built the system to*

*hold it all together. They didn't have a yes/no machine. They said yes to everything shocking. Yes.  
Not principle. Sensation. Not clarity. Chaos.  
Not a filter. A free-for-all. That's why the RECKONING burned hot and burned out.*

So, what do you really sell?

**The permission you don't need:**

Nobody's going to give you permission to be different.  
Your board won't vote on it.  
Your customers won't request it.  
Your industry won't encourage it.  
Your parents won't understand it.

Permission comes from deciding that your brand's impact matters more than playing it safe.

**It's your RECKONING.**

What would you build if you had three years left?  
What in your industry frustrates you to the end of time?  
What would you say if no one could stop you?  
Not what sounds good in a mission statement.  
What keeps you up at night with excitement?

Here's an example.

Financial Planner says: "We offer personalized planning services."  
What they really want to say: "We build wealth that lasts generations." What they should say: "We don't manage money. We build family empires."

The first version sounds like everyone else. The second sounds like someone you'd actually want to work with. But the third makes competitors irrelevant.

**Glossier's** Emily Weiss had a secret: Beauty marketing was top-down. Glossier built it bottom-up. Their RECKONING: "What if beauty marketing reflected how women actually think?" They created conversational marketing that felt like advice from friends, not beauty counter pressure. Revenue: Zero to \$200M in 10 years by making beauty feel approachable.

### **RECKONING Examples:**

**Dyson:** "We fix what everyone else accepts as standard."

**Stanley (after the Quencher success):** "We prove that industrial toughness belongs beyond the job site."

**Slack:** Work communication doesn't need email, real-time channels work better.

### **Here's what happens.**

If you keep playing it safe, you sound exactly like your competitors, compete on price, and nobody remembers you exist.

If you own what you believe, wrong customers leave, and right customers join. Price becomes irrelevant, and the competition gets nervous.

### **It's natural.**

As Anna says, "There is so much beauty in what is natural. If you don't take advantage of that, you really miss out." The spaces she designs and builds feel inevitable. The way they should be.

So you have to ask yourself: What's natural about how you work that you're not talking about? What's obvious to you that's revolutionary to others? It's your brand's natural ambition. What you're afraid to say is more powerful than any safe positioning.

When you've built your INTERNAL engine and your EXTERNAL execution delivers, ETERNAL is where you step into what you're really here to do.

Now write it down. Say it out loud.

Your customers want you to be honest about what you do. They're also bored by "good enough."

Stop doubting the work you've done to get here.

Stop asking for permission.

**Be honest. That's your truth.**

## RECKONING TRUTH BRAND LAW

Don't lie for attention. Trust yourself. Tell the **Truth**.

### YOUR RECKONING TRUTH FIELD TEST

**1. If time was running out, what would you stop pretending to care about?**

Tear up your to-do list. What's the one thing that would matter if the clock was ticking?

**2. What untruth does your industry protect, and why are you done playing along?**

Anger isn't a flaw; it's direction. Burn the script!

**3. What truth have you never said out loud because it scares you?**

That's what's worth building a brand around.

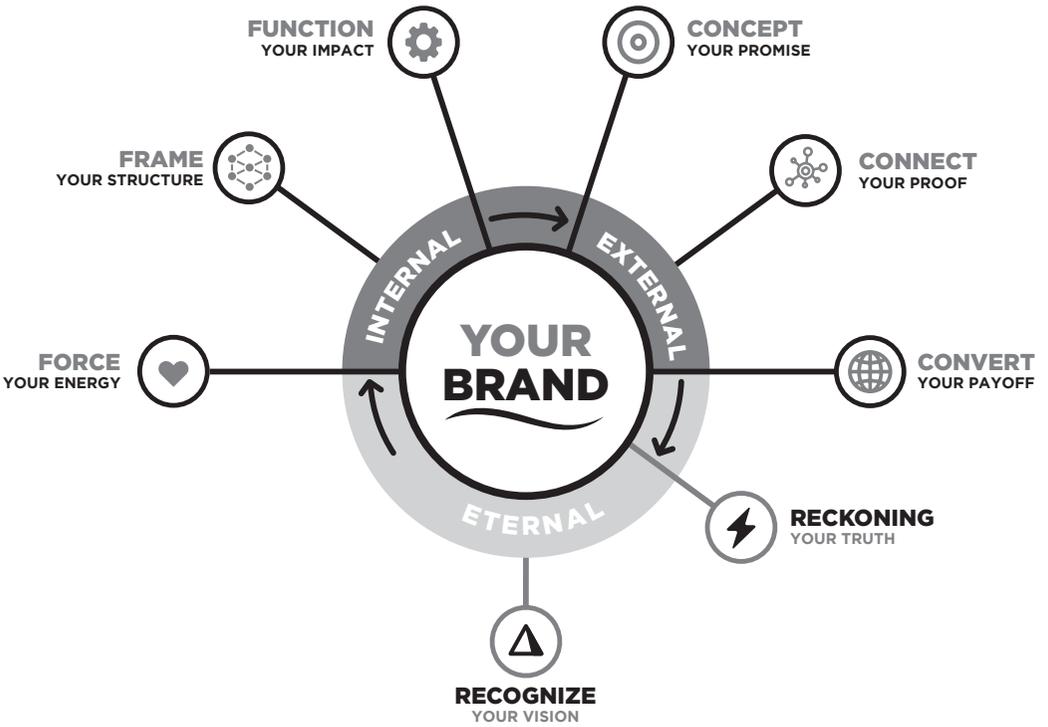
### LESS IS MORE

You backed yourself. You eliminated the fear of judgment and built something worth remembering.

Your brand became intentional, not accidental.







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**CHAPTER TWENTY**  
**RECOGNIZE VISION**

---



**YOUR BRAND  
HAS VISION.  
WHAT  
DO YOU SEE?**

Vision is the automatic perspective that proves your brand's INTERNAL engine is fully aligned. That you trust what you've built. It's what your brand sees when it's no longer trying to look.

Princeton psychologists researched and published in Psychological Science that **people can form impressions about personality and trust in less than 100 milliseconds.**<sup>19</sup>

With your INTERNAL aligned, you immediately see clarity. Other brands stumble into rooms making incorrect assumptions. You see what matters.

**| *First impressions can last a lifetime.* |**

Your perspective is now predictable.

### **The Evidence Board**

Picture this: Everything on the evidence board connects.

What do you see?

The pattern everyone else missed. The connection that solves the mystery. The obvious truth that was always hiding in plain sight.

You see it.

Patterns. Strings. Connections.

What your brand sees first is always a reflection of its FORCE, FRAME and FUNCTION.

A brand built to fix broken systems will see inefficiency.

A brand forged by its principles will see who's isolated.

A brand positioned in the right place will see what's being accepted. Your Vision is your INTERNAL engine in action.

**REALITY CHECK:** Bellator Fighting Championships

*When I asked them what their brand would see on the evidence board, the answer was immediate:*

*"The person who thinks they're the toughest in the room. And the exact moment we'd be tougher."*

*That wasn't marketing speak. That was Vision.*

*They didn't need a brand workshop to figure that out. Their FORCE (combat sports lack respect and legitimacy) plus their FRAME (dominance through discipline) plus their FUNCTION (where fighters prove themselves) created inevitable perspective.*

*They couldn't look at their industry and not see hierarchy and conquest. The evidence board showed them what everyone else had missed: MMA needed a legitimate challenger to UFC's dominance.*

*The logo I developed was a battle-hardened Roman centurion.*

*A face hidden in shadows.*

*Every visual element flowed from that core perspective. They didn't see networking opportunities. They saw conquest opportunities.*

*Within five years they became a serious competitor to UFC and were eventually acquired for millions.*

In beer, safe is everywhere. **BrewDog** studied the evidence board of

an industry under siege. Equity for Punks, beers in stuffed squirrels, and an “anti-corporate” stance that made “big beer” look ancient. Their execution wasn’t hops. It was hostility.

They didn’t choose to see corporate beer as the enemy. Their FORCE, that craft beer had been domesticated, made it impossible for them to see anything else.

As a referee, I learned that under pressure, your INTERNAL engine is critical to surviving those final minutes. My Vision wasn’t about making one perfect call; it was creating an environment where both teams trusted the game would be fair. When you have that Vision, you don’t get caught up in the moment. You see it all. You let the teams decide the outcome because your complete foundation has already been built for them to compete.

Most brands see what they think they should:

Safe networking.

Ways to fit in.

Permission to explain.

Chances to avoid controversy.

That’s brand delusion.

Multiple Visions depending on context? LinkedIn professional, Instagram casual, proposals corporate?

That’s blurred Vision.

Your Vision isn’t about politeness. It’s about perspective.

| *Your brand should see the same truth everywhere.* |

### **The Five Types of Vision**

**The Conqueror:** Markets to influence, not enter. **Amazon** doesn't see retail spaces, they see territories to absorb.

**The Connector:** Islands that need bridges, people who need each other. **Zoom** doesn't see video calls, they see separated humans who belong together.

**The Authority:** Respect that's already theirs, just unrecognized. **Goldman Sachs** doesn't see pitching opportunities, they see people who need their guidance.

**The Rebel:** Rules begging to be broken, permission waiting to be seized. **Banksy** doesn't see walls, they see blank canvases everywhere.

**The Revolutionary:** Systems ready for complete reconstruction. **TikTok** doesn't see social media, they see human attention patterns ready for rewiring.

### **Brands that see every string:**

**Red Bull:** Sees the extraordinary. Every interaction is a chance to make something impossible feel inevitable.

**Fenty Beauty:** Sees beauty standards that exclude instead of include. Every product is a chance to redefine what's possible.

**A24 Films:** Sees stories everyone else thinks won't sell. Every film is proof that weird works.

## The String Test

Let's use **Allbirds**.

**String 1 – Website visit:** What does the brand see in your visitor's real problem? *Comfortable shoes shouldn't poison the planet.*

**String 2 – Sales conversation:** What does the brand see in their situation that others don't? *Sustainable doesn't mean sacrifice. Natural performs better.*

**String 3 – Social media:** What does the brand see in culture that needs addressing? *Fashion dumps on the planet. Shoes don't have to.*

**String 4 – Crisis:** What does the brand see in the problem that reveals the solution? *Climate anxiety creates demand. Transparency beats greenwashing.*

Same anchor everywhere:

Synthetic is the enemy, natural is the answer.

## RECOGNIZE Examples

Your Vision becomes automatic when your internal engine is complete.

**Dyson** sees engineering problems hiding in plain sight, in every product category.

**Stanley** sees "unbreakable" working everywhere, not just on jobsites.

Slack sees email chaos (threads, cc's, lost context) in every workplace communication.

But you don't really know your Vision until you pressure test it.

### **The Pressure Test**

Crisis hits. Competitors attack. Customers rage.

Your brand sees what it can't help but see.

Bellator saw conquest. BrewDog saw betrayal. I saw fairness.

**Your FORCE, FRAME, and FUNCTION make your Vision deliberate.**

You see it all. Your Vision has become automatic.

You can't turn it off. You can't fake it.

You're not doing branding anymore.

**You are your brand.**

## RECOGNIZE VISION BRAND LAW

**Vision** is what your brand automatically sees.

### YOUR RECOGNIZE VISION FIELD TEST

**1. What does your brand see first in any situation?**

Define the pattern, problem, or opportunity you spot immediately before analysis, before research, before anyone else does.

**2. What does your brand see that competitors overlook?**

Identify what your Vision filter catches that others miss, accept, or normalize.

**3. Does your brand see the same thing everywhere?**

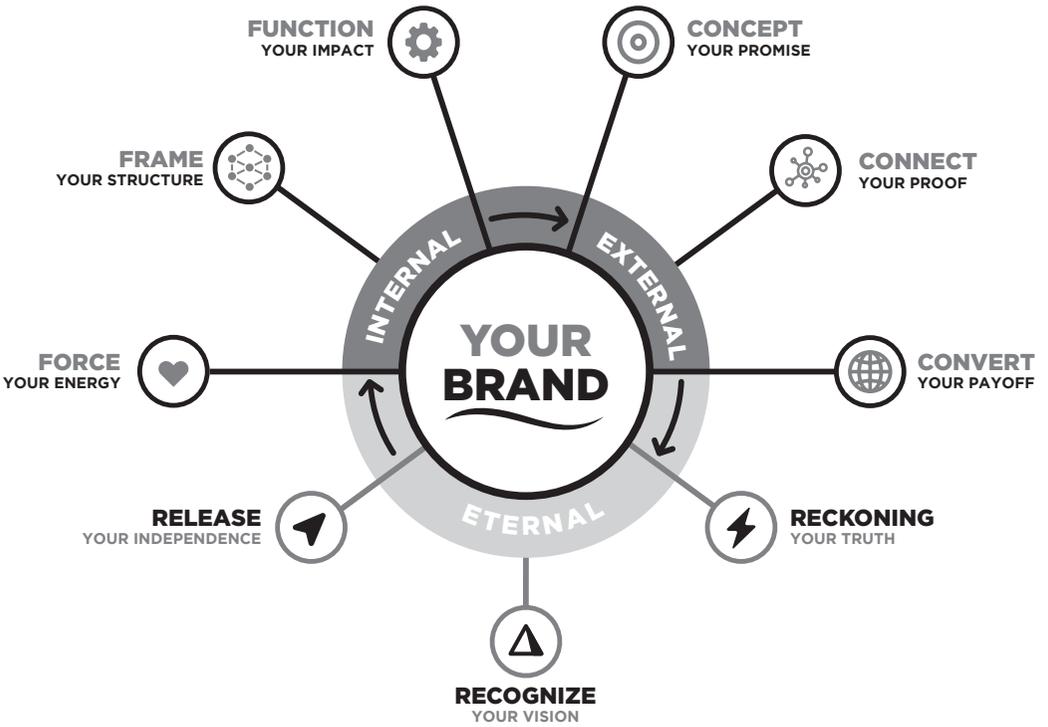
Test consistency: Website, sales conversations, social media, crisis moments. Same perspective every time?

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped questioning your approach  
and started trusting your perspective.  
Your Vision became automatic, your strategic advantage.







**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**

**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE**  
**RELEASE INDEPENDENCE**

---



**YOUR INDUSTRY  
INDEPENDENCE  
IN SECONDS.  
ARE YOU  
READY?**

Everything you've built leads to this moment.

You've found your FORCE.

You've built your FRAME.

You've defined your FUNCTION.

You've clarified your CONCEPT.

You've designed your CONNECT.

You've optimized your CONVERT.

You've done the work.

Now complete your RECKONING and Independence in seconds.

**| *This isn't an elevator pitch. It's your declaration of Independence.* |**

When your Brand String Theory is connected, Independence is not a soap opera or box. It's a conversation. It's Who You Are. When everything connects, it's inevitable. Not practiced. Just the truth.

Are you ready?

## **Independence**

Most people think an elevator pitch is about explaining what you do.

No. And it's not about being better.

It's about making everyone else irrelevant.

## **The BRAND INDEPENDENCE TEST™**

**DIAGNOSE:** The Problem

**DELIVER:** The Solution

**DEMONSTRATE:** The Proof

## **Let's build it.**

**DIAGNOSE:** What industry problem needs to die?

(This comes from your RECKONING, what you need to say)

**DELIVER:** How do you dismantle that problem?

(This comes from your CONCEPT, your new clear option)

**DEMONSTRATE:** What's your proof of distinction?

(This comes from your FRAME, your track record)

## **The BRAND INDEPENDENCE TEST™ Results**

**IT Cleaner:** "Most IT departments are glorified expense reports. We eliminate them entirely. Over 200 companies have fired their IT teams after hiring us."

**Real Estate Disruptor:** "Realtors force sellers to choose between being traditionally overcharged or underserved with flat fees. We rehabilitate real estate with full service and Equity Protection™ for 1%. Our sellers keep an average of \$10,000 more than traditional brokers while getting full service."

**Wealth Pioneer:** "Financial advisors are just commission farmers. They push mutual funds so you pay advisor fees forever. We architect generational wealth, so your family builds ongoing security."

Each one works in seconds.

The UK/Lithuania-based **Revolut** pioneered a new approach to finances. Their Independence is:

*"You're paying fees to multiple financial institutions. We put all your financial needs in one place with no hidden fees. Millions of customers save thousands by replacing their bank, broker, exchange, and travel card with Revolut."*

## **BRAND INDEPENDENCE TEST™ Examples:**

**Dyson:** "Every appliance category has accepted norms. We re-engineer from first principles until physics proves it works better. We have reinvented commercially successful products across five primary industries."

**Stanley (after the Quencher success):** "Industrial utility should not be limited to jobsites. We liberated 'unbreakable' across work, life, and culture. The Quencher proved belonging works everywhere, ten times over."

**Slack:** Workplace communication defaulted to email for 40 years. We replaced it with organized channels. 10M+ daily users proved Channels beats workplace emails.

## **Your Turn**

**DIAGNOSE:** What industry practice makes you sick?

**DELIVER:** How do you make that practice extinct?

**DEMONSTRATE:** What's your proof?

Write it, say it, and test it on someone who doesn't know your industry. If they don't get it, rewrite it.

If it doesn't make them want to hire you and fire everyone else, it's not ready.

### **The Test**

Your Independence works when:

Someone immediately understands the problem.

They realize you're the solution.

They question why they'd ever use anyone else.

They've forgotten about your competition.

### **The Verdict**

This isn't networking small talk; this is your industry Independence in seconds.

When someone asks what you do, you don't describe your services.

You execute. You don't hope to fit in. You show them that you see what's possible.

When prospects compare you to others, there is no comparison.

There's only you.

### **Your Brand String Theory is complete:**

Your FORCE becomes their reason to abandon everyone else.

Your FRAME becomes their reason to never look back.

Your FUNCTION becomes their reason to tell everyone.

Your CONCEPT becomes their reason to listen.

Your CONNECT becomes their reason to trust.

Your CONVERT becomes their reason to act.

Your RECKONING becomes their reason to follow.

Your RECOGNIZE becomes their reason to see what you see.

Your RELEASE becomes their reason to remember you forever.

This is your complete presence strategy.

**It's your brand declaration of Independence.**

## RELEASE INDEPENDENCE BRAND LAW

Diagnose, deliver, and demonstrate your **Independence**.

### YOUR RELEASE INDEPENDENCE FIELD TEST

**1. What industry practice makes you sick to your stomach?**

Pinpoint the frustration or lie that made you start your business.

**2. How do you erase it from existence?**

Define your solution that eliminates the problem completely.

**3. What's your proof?**

Show evidence that you're winning and they're losing.

### LESS IS MORE

You stopped explaining what you do and started executing.  
Your declaration of Independence  
now makes you the only choice.





**BRAND** ) **STRING  
THEORY™**

**CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO**  
**BRAND STRING THEORY**

---



**YOUR  
BRAND  
STRING  
THEORY.  
YOUR  
CHOICE.**

So here we are.

You've got the framework. You've seen what works. Now what?

You need the laws that work under any condition. When everything's on the line, rigid thinking fails.

**| Rules break under pressure. Laws strenghten. |**

Your brand is the same.

Right now, you have two choices:

**Safety**

Go back on safari or find your reflection like the Mirror Guy. Keep doing what everyone else does. Compete on price. Hope someone notices you. Stay comfortable. Stay forgettable. Stay frustrated.

**Brand String Theory**

Build something that works. Connect every piece of your brand so that it all pulls in the same direction. Stop competing on price. Start competing with your Principle. Make something worth remembering.

If your brand died tomorrow, would customers be devastated? Or would they barely notice?

Most brands are monuments to "good enough." They compete without a reason for customers to choose them over anyone else.

Your brand can be different. But only if you choose to be different.

Here's what happens when you choose String Theory:

You stop feeling forced to micro-manage because your team is aligned.

You stop asking, "What should we do?" and start asking, "What would we do?"

Your team makes decisions like you would, even when you're not there. Customers don't just buy from you, they refuse to buy from anyone else. Competitors don't just lose deals to you, they start copying your approach.

You don't just build a business... you build something that outlasts you.

**Warby Parker** decided in a Wharton dorm room that glasses shouldn't cost hundreds of dollars. **Dollar Shave Club** launched with one viral video. **Spanx** started with an idea that pantyhose were stupid. **Liquid Death** took water and said, "Murder your thirst." **Casper** decided from a garage that mattress shopping was broken.

None of them played it safe. None of them asked for permission.

They built something that worked.

Connected every piece.

Made their Principle non-negotiable.

**Your industry is waiting.**

Right now, your industry is full of safari and Mirror Guy brands doing the same old stuff, saying the same things, and competing on the same terms.

They're all waiting for someone to show them what's actually possible.

That someone could be you.

**Whether you own a business, manage people, work for someone, are between opportunities, or are looking for what's next, you're here.**

You're here because you've already decided you can do it.

So, if you're going already (or ready to go), start with your **FORCE**.

The question:

**What was so broken you had to fix it? Or:**

**What is so broken you have to fix it?**

Everything else flows from there.

Just like physicists theorize that everything in the universe connects through strings of energy, every part of you, your brand, works the same way.

When you map these connections, when you build your Brand String Theory, everything becomes clear.

**The choice is yours.**

You can build a brand that people search for today and tomorrow. You can create something others can't copy because they don't

believe what you believe. You can connect with customers who defend you.

You can walk into any room and have everyone know exactly why you're there.

The world doesn't need another brand.

It needs you.

Now deliver the evidence.

Connect the strings.

**The Brand String Theory.**

**Make Your Brand Demand a Search Party.**

## THE PROCESS

INTERNAL FORM		<b>FORCE</b> YOUR ENERGY	"Every strong FORCE changes someone's world."
		<b>FRAME</b> YOUR STRUCTURE	"Preferences are opinions. Your FRAMES are laws."
		<b>FUNCTION</b> YOUR IMPACT	"Being everywhere doesn't make you visible."
EXTERNAL CLAIM		<b>CONCEPT</b> YOUR PROMISE	"One sentence forces clarity to never leave the room."
		<b>CONNECT</b> YOUR PROOF	"Turn your separators into visual proof that sells before you speak."
		<b>CONVERT</b> YOUR PAYOFF	"Commitment works both ways."
ETERNAL REIGN		<b>RECKONING</b> YOUR TRUTH	"Your secret ambition is your strategy."
		<b>RECOGNIZE</b> YOUR VISION	"Your brand should see the same truth everywhere."
		<b>RELEASE</b> YOUR INDEPENDENCE	"This isn't an elevator pitch. It's your declaration of independence."

## THE BRAND LAWS

<b>FORCE</b>	Your <b>Worth</b> in one sentence drives everything. <b>Change</b> the industry norm that competitors accept. Build a brand they'd miss forever, if it <b>Disappeared</b> .
<b>FRAME</b>	Your <b>Belief</b> is your yes/no machine. Your <b>Principle</b> eliminates decisions and makes them obvious. Every memorable brand has that one thing that's <b>Forged</b> .
<b>FUNCTION</b>	Arrive early, <b>Position</b> consistently, and see clearly. When your brand <b>Works</b> , people don't just buy; they belong. Balance <b>Friction</b> to deliver the best outcomes.
<b>CONCEPT</b>	Your <b>Hook</b> attracts, delivers, and empowers. Keep clarity in the room with one <b>Sentence</b> that solves and delivers. Your message <b>Today</b> should make your old self proud.
<b>CONNECT</b>	Design proves your <b>Benefits</b> are real. <b>Trust</b> is out there, but not everywhere. Use <b>Jealousy</b> as competitive and strategic intelligence.
<b>CONVERT</b>	<b>Commitment</b> works both ways. Remove the <b>Excuse</b> . Earn the Commitment. For every Commitment, sell the change and the <b>Future</b> .
<b>RECKONING</b>	Stop lying for attention. Tell the <b>Truth</b> .
<b>RECOGNIZE</b>	<b>Vision</b> is what your brand automatically sees.
<b>RELEASE</b>	Diagnose, deliver, and demonstrate your <b>Independence</b> .

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## INDEX

### A

A24 Films, 205  
Action Hierarchy (FUNCTION Works), 85  
ADT, 117  
Advocacy, 85  
Airbnb, 86  
Alinea, 93  
Allbirds, 29, 205-206  
Amazon, 205  
Ambition Categories (RECKONING Truth), 194  
Apple, 50, 92, 98-99, 150-151, 180-181  
Arrival (FUNCTION Positioning), 79  
Attack (CONVERT Excuse) 171

### B

B2B (Business-to-Business)  
- Emotions, 118  
- Hesitation, 170-171  
BagUps, 32, 61  
Banksy, 205  
Barbour, 135  
Basecamp, 171  
Behavior Diagnostic, 86  
Bellator Fighting Championships, 203  
Ben & Jerry's, 50  
Benetton, 194  
Blissy, 110  
Blockbuster, 122, 184  
Brand Independence Test™, 212, 214  
Brand Laws, 225  
Brand String Theory™  
- Antroduction To, 1-5  
- Diagram, 8  
- As Actionable System, 220-223  
BrewDog, 203  
Bumble, 151

### C

Calendly, 109, 170  
Canva, 38  
Casper, 221  
Change Ladder (CONVERT Future), 177  
Chewy, 169  
Chime, 30  
Chobani, 194  
Clarity, 4, 106-112, 134, 152  
Coca-Cola, 117  
Committee Problem (RECKONING Truth), 193  
Commitment, 159-165  
Commitment Isolation Test™, 160-165  
Commitment Reality (CONVERT Excuse), 177  
CONCEPT, 103-126  
- Hook, 115-119  
- Sentence, 105-112  
- Today, 121-126  
CONNECT, 129-154  
- Benefits, 131-137  
- Jealousy, 147-154  
- Trust, 139-145  
CONVERT, 9, 157-179  
- Commitment, 159-165  
- Excuse, 167-173  
- Future, 175-179  
Costco, 59-60  
Creates Change in 3 Ways (FORCE Change), 29-30  
CrossFit, 194

### D

Design, as proof, 131 - 137  
Distinction Test (CONNECT Benefits), 136  
DJ, 4, 123, 168  
Dollar Shave Club, 109, 221  
Duolingo, 135, 164, 185  
Dyson, 180-181, 196, 206, 214

E

- Earth Breeze, 39
- ETERNAL, 187-217
- Evidence Board, 1, 23
- Evidence Board (RECOGNIZE Vision), 202
- Evolution Problem (CONCEPT Today), 123

F

- Fenty Beauty, 205
- FORCE, 15-43
  - Worth, 17-24
  - Change, 27-33
  - Disappeared, 35-43
- Forgetting Curve, 68
- FRAME, 9, 45-70
  - Belief, 47-54
  - Principle, 57-62
  - Forged, 65-70
- FRAME Belief Test (FRAME Belief), 52
- FUNCTION, 9, 73-95
  - Position, 75-81
  - Works, 83-89
  - Friction, 91-95

G

- Glossier, 78, 196
- Goldman Sachs, 205

H

- Headspace, 109
- Hello Kitty, 152
- Hims & Hers, 177
- Hoka, 123
- Hiut Denim, 50
- HubSpot, 142

I

- IBM, 28, 50
- IKEA, 93
- Inside B2B (CONVERT Excuse), 170
- INTERNAL, 13-99

J

- Jaguar, 124
- Jealousy, As Competitive Intelligence, 147-154
- Jealousy Reveal (CONNECT Jealousy), 150-152
- Jealousy Types (CONNECT Jealousy), 148-149

K

- Kicking Horse Coffee, 38-39, 143
- Kit (ConvertKit), 177
- Kodak, 122

L

- Laws, Brand, 225
- Laws vs. Rules, 220
- LEGO, 21, 117
- Less is More, Everywhere
- Liquid Death, 149, 221
- Loom, 169
- Lush, 87

M

- Mailchimp, 124
- Major League Baseball, 94
- MasterClass, 30, 164
- Memory Hierarchy (FRAME Forged), 69
- Memory is a Thief (FRAME Forged), 66-67
- Message Evolution Success (CONCEPT Today), 124
- Mirror Guy Brands, 18, 220
- Monocle, 151
- Monzo, 60
- Muji, 31-32

N

- Nando's, 151-152
- Netflix, 149,
  - Case Study, 184
- Nightclubs, 28, 66, 150, 176
- Nike, 78, 117
- Notion, 78

O

- Oatly, 29
- Oura Ring, 86-87

- P
- Patagonia, 21, 108
  - Paul Rand, 134
  - Peloton, 30, 142-143
  - Positioning (FUNCTION Positioning), 75-81
  - Presence Problem (FUNCTION Positioning), 78
  - Pressure, 6, 45
- R
- RECKONING Truth, 189-198
  - RECOGNIZE Vision, 199-208
  - Red Bull, 205
  - Reformation, 151
  - RELEASE Independence, 211-217
  - Relevance, 121-126
  - Relevance Pressure Test (FORCE Disappeared), 40
  - Revolut, 214
  - Rick Rubin, 149
  - Ripple Effect (CONCEPT Sentence), 111
  - Rugby, Refereeing Analogies, 4, 19, 30, 68, 76, 88, 94, 106, 136, 172
- S
- Safari Branding (FORCE Worth), 18, 220
  - Salesforce, 77
  - Sears, 122
  - Sentence Test (CONCEPT Sentence), 108
  - Sephora, 68
  - Shopify, 170
  - Slack, 87, 109, 170
  - Spanx, 221
  - SPOT Real Estate, 40, 132-133
  - Spotify, 60, 151
  - Status Quo (FORCE Worth), 28, 171
  - Stanley, 182-183, 196, 206, 214
  - String Test (RECOGNIZE Vision), 205
  - Stripe, 30
- T
- Tesla, 29
  - ThredUp, 30
  - TikTok, 205
  - Today Test (CONCEPT Today), 125
  - TOMS, 29
  - Tony's Chocolonely, 21
  - Trader Joe's, 94
  - TurboTax, 117
  - Turquoise Health, 30
  - Typeform, 169
- U
- Uber, 194
  - United Airlines, 133
  - Uniqlo, 117
- V
- Vision, Five Types (RECOGNIZE Vision), 204-205
  - Visual Alignment = Benefit Clarity (CONNECT Benefits) 134
- W
- Walmart, 22
  - Warby Parker, 31, 221
  - Wells Fargo, 133-134
  - WeWork, 96-97
  - Whole Foods, 117
  - Won't Factor (FRAME Principle), 60-61
- Y
- Yes/No Machine (FRAME Belief), 48
  - YETI, 142
- Z
- Zappos, 38
  - Zoom, 30, 205



## RICHARD EVERY

From the indie nightclub scene in South Africa, to high-performance rugby fields in the United States, Richard Every has built a career on one truth: Under pressure, clarity is everything.

He founded The Station, Durban's pre-eminent indie club in the 1990s, where he learned to make quick decisions, lead teams, and read the room under pressure. He later co-founded the design agency Wasserfall Every, where brands, messaging, and typefaces needed to speak clearly and confidently in crowded markets.



A lifelong commitment to rugby saw Richard rise to South Africa's Top 20 Referee Panel, earning a reputation for using laws as a framework to create a consistent environment where making decisive calls in high-stakes moments is critical. Entertainment, design, and refereeing converged into a single discipline: Systems, signals, and behaviors that align action.

Brand String Theory™ is his operating system for brands, connecting what drives you internally to how you show up externally and how you execute when it counts. When everything's connected, you don't just build a business, you build something competitors can't copy.

After two decades in Chicago, Richard and his wife, architect Anna Claude, relocated to New York's Hudson River Valley, where he continues his consultancy and studio.



Your team is smart. But they don't quite get it.  
You want to approve the campaign. But something feels off.

You can't explain what's wrong. You just know. And that makes you the bottleneck.  
The "it's not quite right" person who's holding everything up.

You're exhausted. And your brand is disappearing.

**Brand String Theory™** gives you what you've been missing: A system so clear that your team can see what you see. A structure so reliable that they can make decisions like you would. And move your brand, your business, forward.

3 fields. 9 dimensions. 21 elements. Connected.  
When one element is under pressure, the strength of the system holds it all together.

**INTERNAL:** Where it all starts.

**EXTERNAL:** Where your brand meets the world.

**ETERNAL:** Where you step into what you're really here to do.

# MAKE YOUR BRAND DEMAND A SEARCH PARTY™

"Richard Every's Brand String Theory is one of those rare branding books that actually reframes how you think. His internal-external-eternal framework brings uncommon clarity to the forces that shape enduring brands, and his case studies connect theory to action with precision. The 'brand string' visuals distill complex strategy into an accessible, highly functional tool.

For professionals at any stage, this book offers meaningful insight and practical value. I strongly endorse it."

— Tom O'Grady

First NBA Creative Director and Founder/CEO, Gameplan Creative



**BRAND** ) **STRING**  
**THEORY™**