

BB&B

Industrial Branding White Paper

INDUSTRIAL BRANDING: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

Branding, or the art of managing a company's brand image, is a key element of the marketing mix. Although often associated with consumer goods and B2C, branding is playing an increasing role in B2B in general and industry in particular. Increased economic pressure, rapid technological change and the globalisation of competition are forcing market players to position themselves more finely and at the same time more assertively. Branding is a strategic tool, often underestimated, that frees energies, generates value and fosters resilience by aligning all the company's driving forces. Branding is much more than a name and logo.

WHAT IS INDUSTRIAL BRANDING?

Industrial branding refers to the creation and management of the brand image of a company operating in the industrial sector. It refers to the management of an institutional brand, as opposed to a product or service brand attached to an existing institutional brand.

Although there is no fundamental difference between B2C and B2B branding and, by extension, industrial branding, the implementation and strategic approach are different. The specific nature of industrial branding stems from a number of factors linked to corporate culture: priority given to industrial facilities, engineering culture, prerogative of rational thinking, emphasis on technology and quality, allocation of budgets, restricted audience, etc.

Industrial branding must take account of this specific environment. A tight focus on the customer to the detriment of the industrial tool will lack substance, just as a purely industrial strategy will fail to win the support of customers. The art of industrial branding therefore consists in intelligently combining the multiple constraints the company is facing to forge a unifying concept. This will make it possible to precisely align all the key factors, whether technological, human, economic or organisational, to the benefit of a strong, rewarding, resilient and, consequently, lasting identity.



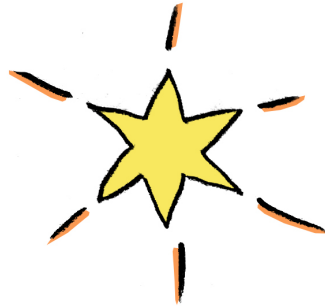
WHY IS INDUSTRIAL BRANDING IMPORTANT?

Branding plays an increasingly important role in the industrial world. Its aim is to create a "strong" brand. A brand is considered strong when it has a clear, coherent, differentiated identity that is appreciated by its stakeholders. Such a brand offers significant advantages:

■ It raises awareness

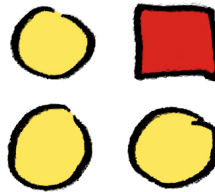
A strong brand is known and recognised. In other words, it is well known by its stakeholders. They have understood and remembered what the brand stands for and the benefits it offers. Awareness is often, but not always, associated with visibility. According to a McKinsey study, 5% of brands account for 95%

of visibility. Given that media attention is focused on a handful of brands, a strong brand has higher organic visibility and requires less advertising support.



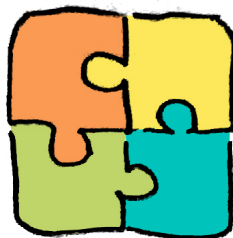
■ It stands out from the competition

A strong brand is defined by its ability to stand out from its competitors. By defining its territory, the brand makes itself unique. It provides a clear, relevant and differentiated value proposition that responds in a unique way to the needs and expectations of its customers. If the products are similar to those of the competition, this does not prevent effective branding. Other differentiating factors (services, distribution, availability, etc.) must then take over.



■ It ensures consistency and impact

A strong brand creates impact through consistent staging. It creates a coherent customer experience across all points of contact. It projects a visual, editorial and emotional identity in line with its value proposition, its economic reality and its resources. It is the systematic repetition of all its identity elements (graphics, verbal expression, design, values, etc.) that consolidates its perception with its target audience.



■ It inspires confidence

A strong brand inspires confidence. It is credible because it conveys ideas and concepts that are true and authentic. It offers tangible proof of its promises, whatever the target audience (customers, employees, society, investors, suppliers, etc.) and builds a solid reputation. A strong brand doesn't need a lot of rhetoric to be heard and convinced.



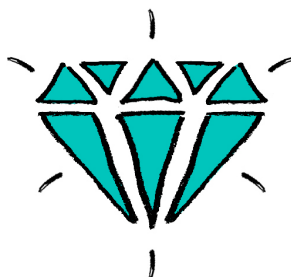
■ It leads to loyalty

A strong brand is appreciated and sought after. It inspires loyalty and recommendation among its current and future customers and employees. It creates an emotional relationship based on trust, satisfaction and commitment. It is a bulwark against price wars and the dictates of the lowest bidder. It increases tolerance of one-off problems and shortcomings.



■ It creates value

A strong brand adds value to a company. By aligning all the company's forces around a unifying concept, it acts as a catalyst and an engine for growth. Strong brands obtain better prices on the market, protect their margins and offer a better return on investment.



■ It makes management easier

A strong brand is a formidable team management tool. By developing a shared vision of the company, its identity, its actions and its expression, the brand creates a common interpretation filter that facilitates internal communication, team cohesion and decision-making.



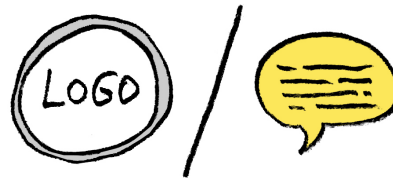
[See the Safe by Choice case study](#)

THE CHALLENGES OF INDUSTRIAL BRANDING

Over and above the traditional challenges of branding in general, industrial branding faces its own unique challenges. These are linked to the complex nature of the industrial environment, the prerogatives of the technical field and often to the culture of the company and its management. There is also a reluctance to adopt methods and ideas that are less Cartesian than those of industrial engineering and economic analysis.

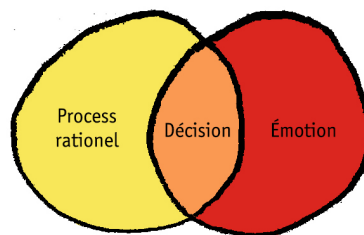
■ Logo versus brand

The meaning, purpose and methods of branding are often misunderstood within companies, right up to management level. For example, people confuse 'visual identity' with 'brand' and ask what the point of a new logo would be. That's obviously not the question, but it shows just how necessary it is to clarify the mission so that everyone can be taken on the same journey. For it is indeed a voyage of discovery, sometimes an uncomfortable one, the end of which is not a new logo but a clarification of the story the brand wants to tell. Only then will the question of adapting the visual identity arise.



■ Rational versus emotional

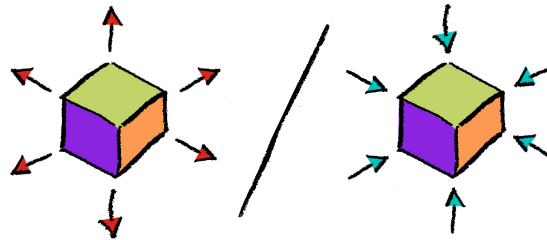
Every industrial company must base its actions on a rational study of its environment. This analysis determines the strategy to be implemented and the resources to be devoted to it. This predominance of rationality is all the more present when the company is shaped by a culture of engineering and technological activity. Yet, as we know, no decision is taken without emotional involvement. The role of branding is precisely to facilitate decision-making. Because although branding is based on logical considerations, it must nevertheless bring out an emotional component that is easy to share. To achieve this, the external viewpoint is just as important as the diversity of internal viewpoints. The use of collective intelligence also makes it possible to take stock while encouraging a diversity of ideas.



■ Internal versus external

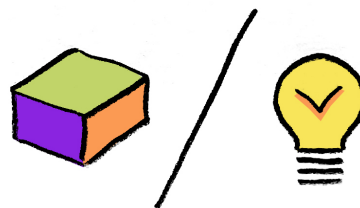
Who better than employees and managers to talk about their company? This certainty often leads to the idea that brand management is a form of introspection. But, as in psychoanalysis, the absence of a mirror invariably results in a distorted perception that makes the exercise impossible. It is therefore essential to involve an external player in the branding exercise in order to provide the necessary correction to the inner vision. Some of the ideas and results of the internal reflection also need to be backed up by a few external interviews with customers and other stakeholders. The main question in

these interviews is not about the objective facts, which are often indisputable, but about their subjective interpretation.



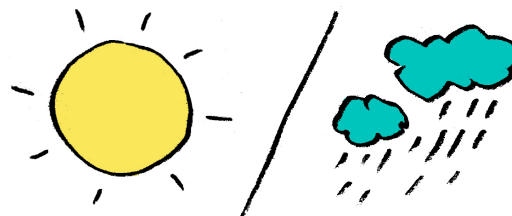
■ **Product versus solution**

Industrial culture is necessarily focused on the notion of the product as the tangible result of industrial activity. However, for the customer, the added value provided by the brand is not solely and always linked to the product itself. Secondary benefits such as availability, control of the supply chain, co-engineering capability, customer relations, design, safety, etc. can influence the purchasing decision. On the other hand, promises of innovation and quality are often misused. This raises the question of what benefits the brand is really offering. Here again, an outside eye is needed to provide a clear analysis.



■ **Will versus reality**

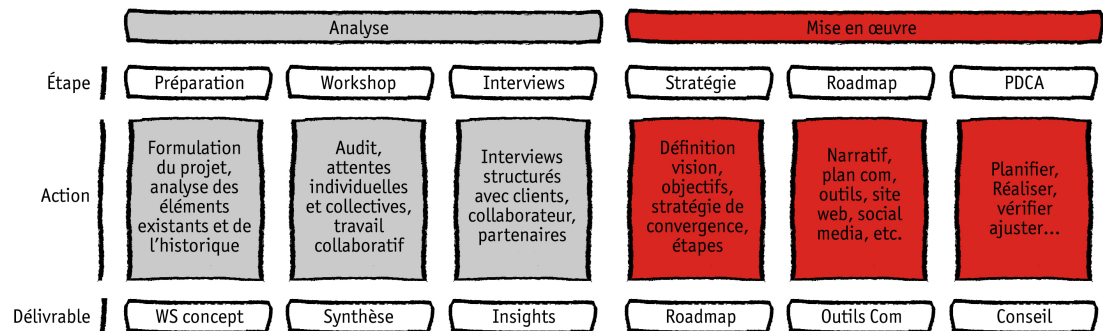
A company is made up of a group of people united around a shared narrative. This narrative is both necessary to maintain cohesion and an obstacle to change. More generally, the internal narrative is often the fruit of a collective will ("We want to be the benchmark in our market"), which is as immutable as it is illusory. In the context of branding, this narrative needs to be constructively challenged and confronted with reality. If necessary, the narrative needs to be modified or replaced in order to bring it into line with the company's economic reality.



[See the BrightLoop case study](#)

INDUSTRIAL BRANDING METHODOLOGY SELON BB&B

Branding is first and foremost an analytical process. Before embarking on the design stage, we need to grasp the company's personality with acuity and foresight, identify the foundations of its existence, pinpoint its strengths and weaknesses, deconstruct its beliefs and create a new narrative. What does the brand offer its customers, partners, employees, investors, its environment and society as a whole? What is its vision and mission in a changing world? This work can never be done in-house alone. Lack of hindsight, the comfort of bias and immutable beliefs prevent any real questioning. External support that is both critical and sympathetic, and therefore constructive, is essential.



■ Analysis of the situation

The first step in the branding process at bb&b is to understand the company and its context. What business is it in? What market? What competition? What positioning? What technological advantage? What benefits for the customer? What is the short- and medium-term economic outlook? The documents and data provided will enable us to acquire a solid knowledge base.

Based on this initial analysis, we draw up the work plan for the subsequent workshops.



■ Information gathering

The next stage is a collective analysis phase involving one or more internal workshops. Using exercises prepared in advance and under the guidance of an experienced external consultant, we review the facts and fictions that shape the collective perception of the company. Where do we come from? How did we get here? What are the strengths that are transforming the company today, the weaknesses that are slowing it down, the value proposition it conveys and the competition it faces?

However, we do not limit ourselves to a purely rational analysis. We also question the mental associations generated by the brand and focus on the myths it has forged through its successes and failures.

This information is not monolithic; it depends on each person. It is best to use collective intelligence by bringing together several people from different backgrounds within the workshop to gather the

information required. Additional interviews with a number of external and internal people help to corroborate and enrich the information.

The analysis results in a verbatim summary that serves as raw material for the following stages.



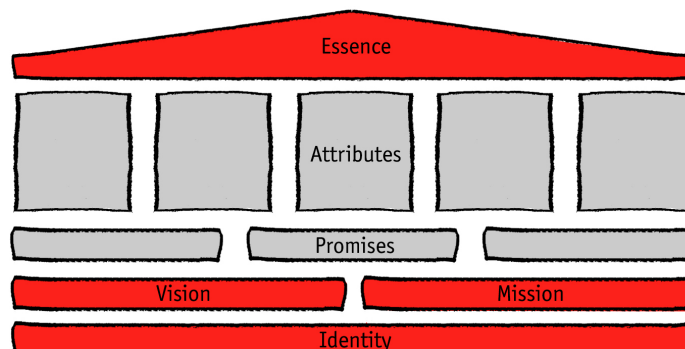
■ **Brand platform**

Based on the preliminary work, we design the brand platform. This forms the foundations on which the brand can stabilise and develop. The brand platform must be both aspirational and realistic; not pretentious or fashionable, but well thought-out, relevant and therefore credible.

At bb&b, the brand platform generally includes the following elements:

- > Brand vision: how does the brand perceive the world? The real vision is often a far cry from the well-intentioned but hardly credible ideals we regularly read on the Internet.
- > Brand mission: what does the brand want? Here too, it's a question of giving a sincere and realistic account of what the brand wants to do and what it can do.
- > Brand essence: the most condensed linguistic form in which brand identity can be summarised. Sometimes, but not always, the brand essence becomes a slogan or 'signature'.
- > Brand attributes: By analysing the lexical field of the brand and the links between the key words present in the communication media and the workshop reports, we can classify them into several distinct categories. By summarising the essence of each category in a single term, we identify the main 'attributes' of the brand. These are the terms that the brand must convey through its logo, name, iconography, graphic and editorial guidelines, etc.
- > The brand's values: Often the declared values are disconnected from the reality in the factories, because what is experienced by employees can be very different from the idyll envisaged by management. The exercise then consists of discovering, with humility and lucidity, what really motivates the brand - and its employees.
- > The brand promise: what does the brand promise its stakeholders? What can a customer, supplier, investor, employee or society expect from the brand?
- > A manifesto sums up the brand's credo, its commitment and the forward-looking dimension of its thinking. Written as a manifesto in its own right, or even as a letter to employees or a simple introduction, the manifesto addresses the target audience and sets out the brand's position.

The brand platform, which brings together all the fundamental elements of the brand, must be presented to and approved by the company's management.



■ Drafting the brand name

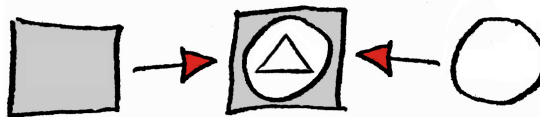
Whether it's a corporate brand, a product or a service, if naming is part of the branding programme, it ideally takes place after the brand platform has been created. An initial semantic analysis establishes a lexical field in which to situate name searches. This is followed by several iterations of copywriting, involving writers from different linguistic backgrounds. It goes without saying that at bb&b we prefer meaningful names to fanciful ones. Before registering a trademark, an internet search should be carried out to check for any conflicts with existing trademarks.



■ Creation of the visual identity

Whether it's a new brand or a rebranding, the question of visual identity always arises. Should you create a new logo, give it a facelift or, on the contrary, play the continuity card and be content to do nothing? There is no easy answer to this question. It has to be said that agencies are more enthusiastic about logos than clients (and even more so clients of clients). To conclude that the logo is unimportant would, however, be risky. As with all the elements that make up a brand, the important thing is to create total consistency. If the existing visual identity meets this requirement, it can be retained. However, it is likely that the branding process has just been launched to evolve the brand. An overhaul of the visual identity is therefore often the logical consequence.

A visual identity overhaul is not a decorative act, but a functional design exercise. As in architecture, the aim is to find a creative solution that responds precisely to the constraints and expectations identified in the brief. The question of subjective preferences then gives way to a more objective one: does the envisaged visual identity correspond in every way to the brand platform?

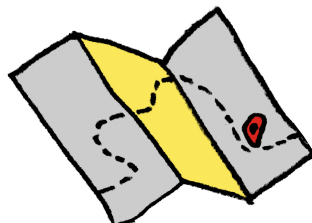


■ Deployment of the brand

With a platform, a name and a visual identity, the brand is well prepared for the big day. It needs to be rolled out quickly to avoid a prolonged cohabitation of old and new elements. In addition to the launch date, a deadline must be set by which all elements of the old identity must be removed.

Having a simple charter or a more elaborate brandbook facilitates consistent implementation across all media, all entities and all communication channels. The charter or brandbook summarises all aspects of the brand's expression, whether graphic, editorial, audiovisual, etc., in order to create as consistent a brand experience as possible.

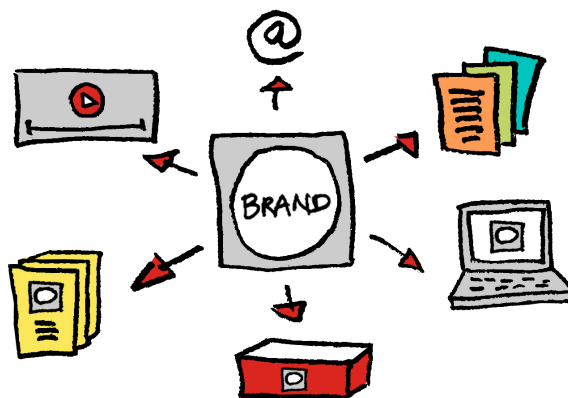
Rolling out a new brand is a complex process that must start with internal information to ensure that employees act as ambassadors for the new brand.



■ Branded content

There is no brand without content. In order to survive, a brand must rely on messages, conveyed by text, sound, images, videos, games, online configurators, etc. In short, a wide variety of resources. Branded content makes the brand visible via search engines and thus makes it shine. It engages, educates and builds loyalty among stakeholders. The content must meet the brand's claims, but it must also meet the requirements of effective search engine optimisation.

In the B2B sector, content creation is often a laborious exercise. Left to in-house resources busy with other tasks, the work is systematically underestimated. So it's a good idea to outsource much, if not all, of the work right from the start of the project. A good starting point is often the creation of an image bank. This, produced by a professional photographer with a good knowledge of the industrial world, enhances and differentiates the company, its employees, its products and its means of production. This is followed by editorial content (website, white papers, brochures, case studies, etc.) and audiovisual content (videos, animations, webinars, podcasts, etc.).



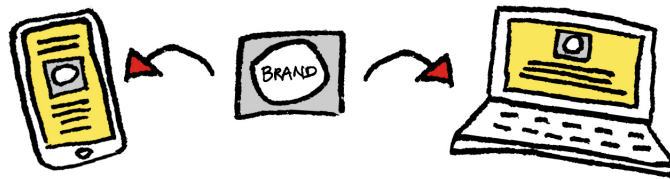
[See the CGR International case study](#)

INDUSTRIAL BRANDING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Digitalisation has significantly changed branding, offering new opportunities for companies to create and manage their brand. Implementing a branding strategy is also affected by the need to use different digital channels and tools to create a consistent and engaging online presence. This involves creating an attractive, user-friendly website and managing social networks to interact with customers and stakeholders. Using online advertising can be a useful way of rapidly increasing brand visibility and awareness.

Brand content is also digitised in different forms, such as blog articles, videos, infographics, podcasts, configurators, etc. It should be noted that the content must be adapted to the different digital channels and optimised for search engines in order to increase the brand's visibility. Email, LinkedIn, TikTok, X etc. are all useful communication channels ... or not. It all depends on the objectives and the target audience.

In short, companies need to adopt an integrated and consistent approach to creating and managing their brand in the digital age, making strategic use of different digital channels and tools and creating quality content to engage and retain their audience.



MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INDUSTRIAL BRANDING

Measuring the effectiveness of branding makes it possible to quantify the return on investment and make any necessary adjustments. This can be done using various key performance indicators (KPIs), such as brand awareness, brand perception, customer loyalty, conversion rate, etc.

The tools and methods for measuring the effectiveness of branding have evolved with the advent of digital technology. Companies can now use tools to analyse web traffic, social networks, online surveys and so on.

Thanks to web traffic analysis tools, we know the number of visitors to a company's website, the most frequently visited pages, the time spent on the site, etc. Google Analytics is one of the most widely used tools. However, interpreting the data collected by these tools is not easy. External expertise is often essential to translate the raw data into clear information.

Social network analysis tools are used to measure user engagement with the brand. While each network has its own analysis tool, other tools such as Hootsuite, Sprout Social and Buffer make it easier to collect and analyse this data.

The opinions and perceptions of customers and stakeholders about the brand are gathered through online surveys. In addition to traditional methods, companies can use tools such as SurveyMonkey, Typeform, Google Forms, etc. for their surveys.



CONCLUSION

In the industry, branding is more than a logo or a slogan. It's a strategic tool for standing out, creating value and strengthening relationships with internal and external stakeholders. In this way, the brand serves as a focal point for all the company's driving forces. By investing in branding, industrial companies have at their disposal a formidable management tool for improving their commercial

performance, strengthening their resilience and aligning human resources with a shared and committed vision, with a rapid return on investment.

LITERATURE

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