

## 7 Things Great Brands Always Do

Great brands are great because they do certain things to get that way -- and stay that way. Here's how you can grow a great brand that is built to last.

By [Peter Economy](#)



IMAGE: Getty Images

Just because you've got a great brand today, [that doesn't mean you're going to have a great brand tomorrow](#). Just ask Kodak, which was ranked as one of the world's four most valuable brands in 1996 (just behind Disney, Coca-Cola, and McDonald's), but that filed for bankruptcy in 2012 after losing more than \$30 billion in market value since its peak in 1999.

According to brand-building consultant [Denise Lee Yohn](#), author of the book *What Great Brands Do*, Kodak's failure wasn't one of poor strategic planning, lack of foresight, or inept product development and design. Instead, Kodak failed to follow through on an integral brand strategy--it no longer did what great brands do.

In her book, Yohn presents 7 brand-building principles that power great brands. Learn how to apply them in your own business and watch your own brand soar.

### 1. Great brands start inside

Building a great brand first depends on [building a great corporate culture](#). In recent years, IBM successfully remade its brand by first remaking its corporate culture.

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## 2. Great brands avoid selling products

Companies that build great brands don't rely on product superiority alone (although that's important too)--they develop superior emotional connections through their projects. Says Yohn, "People buy according to how brands make them feel, or what identity they help them experience and express."

## 3. Great brands ignore trends

It's often tempting to follow trends with your brand, and they may help attract short-term attention. However, since trends can change so quickly, you put your brand identity at risk by following them.

## 4. Great brands don't chase customers

It's also tempting to chase customers no matter who they are, and to comprise your brand messages accordingly. The result, however, is that you end up comprising brand identity for short-term revenue. Says Yohn, "If you consider your best target customers and focus on the unique value you bring them, you strengthen your brand as well as your ties to these customers."

## 5. Great brands sweat the small stuff

Consumers today have elevated expectations of their brands, but unfortunately, organizational silos are practically guaranteed to create gaps in customer experience of your brand. According to Yohn, "Great brands, with REI as one example, go to great lengths to close these gaps--and they do it as integral expressions of their brands."

## 6. Great brands commit and stay committed

Great brands--from Shake Shack to Vanguard--are willing to sacrifice short-term profit and growth to maintain brand integrity. Clarify the essence of your brand and then build a brand platform [that establishes competitive advantages you'll never want to compromise.](#)

## 7. Great brands never have to "give back"

Great brands don't have to make a special point of giving back because they deliberately create shared value for all their stakeholders--including their communities. They use the power of their brands to inspire change and have a beneficial impact on society.

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