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**WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO:
The Seven Brand-Building Principles that
Separate the Best from the Rest**

By Denise Lee Yohn

“Yohn’s book is helpful reading for executives and managers at all levels,
and it will guide the next generation of great brands.”

– *Publishers Weekly*

Ask a CEO or leader to define a “brand,” and they will often turn to the usual suspects: tagline, logo, advertising, public relations, social media. Traditionally, brands have been understood in this way – as outward-facing, image-focused expressions, confining the stewardship of the brand to marketing and advertising. But today’s most successful and iconic companies – think Zappos, Starbucks, and Nike – have one critical attribute in common: they have elevated brand-building from a siloed function and use their brand as a strategic management tool that guides every aspect of their business. And they have achieved higher-than-average profit margins as a result.

In her new book **WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest** (Jossey-Bass; January 27, 2014), brand-building consultant and speaker **Denise Lee Yohn** proves that a company’s brand is its most powerful tool for growth, and offers business leaders, owners, and general managers seven principles and powerful tools for putting the brand where it belongs: in the driver’s seat of the organization.

Yohn’s “brand-as-business” approach – the systematic management of the business around the brand – works, yet a recent survey of marketing executives revealed that 64% feel that their brands do not influence decisions made

at their companies. This means that nearly two-thirds of companies are pouring millions of dollars into marketing and advertising without aligning their business strategies with the values and attributes they're communicating. And the current brand thought leadership is not closing this gap, because most "best practices" focus narrowly on expressing the brand through advertising or design, marketing it through new media, or managing it through culture and employee engagement. The concept of using a brand as an operating tool has yet to be widely embraced at the highest levels of business. In **WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO**, Yohn seeks to shift this mindset by demonstrating how a brand-as-business approach fuels growth by driving culture, company operations, and customer experiences.

Yohn's approach is based on 25 years of success helping companies build and position exceptional brands. After serving as lead strategist at advertising agencies for Burger King and Land Rover and as the marketing analyst for Jack-in-the-Box and Spiegel catalogs, Yohn went on to head Sony Electronics Inc.'s first ever brand office. During her time as vice president/general manager of brand and strategy, Yohn garnered major corporate awards, but she also experienced firsthand how even the strongest of companies can lose their advantage when the brand -building is relegated to marketing tactics. Yohn worked at Sony during the height of the digital transition, and watched Sony's brand strength begin to weaken as fast followers and pioneering disruptors began to challenge it on pricing and innovation. She and her colleagues knew they needed to find new ways to leverage Sony's brand value, but they faced the same hurdles that so many corporate leaders still face today: how to recognize the early warning signs in time, think differently, challenge ingrained ways of doing things that may have worked in the past, and make tough changes, even if it means replacing tested best practices with new principles.

WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO is the playbook Yohn wishes she and her colleagues had had to help them leverage Sony's brand to face the business challenges of their time. She has since used the "brand-as-business" approach to build, position, and extend iconic brands in a number of industries and the same principles have been proven out by the experiences of some of the best companies in the world. Drawing on first-hand case studies, practical tools, and examples of iconic brands as varied as IBM, Patagonia, and Shake Shack, Yohn introduces the seven principles that epitomize great brands:

1. **Great Brands Start Inside** – cultivate a vibrant corporate culture around the brand
2. **Great Brands Avoid Selling Products** – develop superior emotional connections through products
3. **Great Brands Ignore Trends** – challenge and anticipate trends, rather than follow them
4. **Great Brands Don't Chase Customers** – accept that your brand is not for everyone
5. **Great Brands Sweat the Small Stuff** – overcome silos to align and unify all your customer experiences
6. **Great Brands Commit and Stay Committed** – sacrifice short-term profit to maintain brand integrity
7. **Great Brands Never Have to "Give Back"** – make social contributions by creating shared value

Companies that embrace this brand-as-business approach will use their brands to fuel, align, and guide every person in the organization and every task they undertake. They will create value by exposing new growth opportunities, shaping business strategies, creating unified and focused teams, and connecting the daily activities of every employee to bigger picture. By reimagining brands as strategic tools, **WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO** will show leaders how to use their brands not just to gain a competitive edge, but to change the game completely.

About the Author

Blending a fresh perspective, twenty-five years of experience, and a talent for inspiring audiences, **Denise Lee Yohn** is a leading authority on building and positioning exceptional brands.



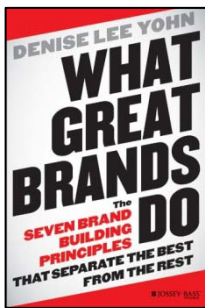
Denise initially cultivated her brand-building approaches through several high-level positions in advertising and client-side marketing. She served as lead strategist at advertising agencies for Burger King and Land Rover and as the marketing leader and analyst for Jack in the Box restaurants and Spiegel catalogs. Denise went on to head Sony Electronics first-ever brand office, where she was the vice president/general manager of brand and strategy and garnered major corporate awards. She now serves as an advisor to brands including Frito-Lay, Oakley, and Jack In the Box.

An influential writer, Denise enjoys challenging readers to think differently about brand-building. She contributes the monthly column “Brand New Perspectives” to *QSR Magazine* and has published work in numerous outlets, including *Harvard Business Review*, *Advertising Age*, *Forbes*, and *OPEN Forum*. In 2008 she launched her blog, brand as business bites™, which the Marketing Executives Networking Group (MENG) named as one of the top 20

marketing blogs.

With her expertise and personal approach, Denise delivers an array of inspirational workshops, presentations, and keynote addresses to business leaders in all industries. When she's not writing or speaking, she serves as the brand director for TEDx San Diego and sits on the board of directors for a branch of the YMCA.

Outside of her professional roles, Denise counts hiking Mount Kilimanjaro, dancing with a professional ballet company, and flying a helicopter as some of her greatest life experiences.



Title: *WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest*

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Advance Praise for WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO

“With her finger on the pulse of today’s competitive business landscape, Denise Lee Yohn knows more than most how to create, sustain, and leverage a great brand. Her writing style coaches readers in a warm and conversational way as she offers up-to-the-minute advice, inspiring examples of organizations who have done it right, and cautionary tales of some who haven’t. If you care about building your brand to grow your business, you can’t afford *not* to read *What Great Brands Do* by Denise Lee Yohn.” —**Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager®* and *TrustWorks!***

“Every leader—from CEOs and CMOs to start-up entrepreneurs—will find Denise's seven brand building principles inspirational and immediately useful. I wish Denise had written *What Great Brands Do* five years earlier—I would have made it required reading for all P&G brand builders!” —**Jim Stengel, former global marketing officer, P&G, and author, *Grow***

“The Internet has resulted in an explosion of options for consumers and never before have brands and branding been more vital to future of a commercial enterprise. Denise Lee Yohn has bottled the elixir of brands and the magic behind brands in this book.” —**Om Malik, founder, GigaOM**

“Denise Lee Yohn beautifully highlights some of the most beloved brands and how they’ve separated themselves from the rest by creating an emotional connection between the organization and its stakeholders. When employees, vendors, customers, and the community feel like a part of the brand, that’s when the magic happens.” —**Kip Tindell, chairman and CEO, The Container Store**

“*What Great Brands Do* is a must-read for leaders who want a fascinating brand. This book is smart, with insider knowledge, and reads beautifully. What I like most is the fresh perspective that Denise Lee Yohn brings to the table - she's definitely someone to keep a close eye on.” —**Sally Hogshead, author, *How the World Sees You: Discover your Highest Value through the Science of Fascination***

“The seven brand-building principles of *What Great Brands Do* represent a provocative view of branding. You will look at brand-building with new eyes.” —**David Aaker, Vice-Chairman, Prophet and author, *Brand Relevance***

“Chock full of provocative insights, compelling case studies, and practical tools, *What Great Brands Do* demystifies the brand-building process and shows business leaders how to revitalize and strengthen their brands.” —**John Gerzema, executive chairman, BAV Consulting, and coauthor, *New York Times* bestseller *The Athena Doctrine* and *The Brand Bubble***

“If, like me, you’ve never been a ‘brand person,’ let Denise Lee Yohn be your guide in building your brand into your business. Follow her principles, embrace her tools, and execute through every single thing you do. As she taught me, that’s what great brands do.” —**B. Joseph Pine II, coauthor, *The Experience Economy* and *Authenticity***

“While brands have become increasingly complex and challenging to manage, Denise has done a terrific job of breaking down what matters in building brands that don't just thrive, but win.” —**Scott Davis, chief growth officer, Prophet, and author, *Building the Brand-Driven Business***

An interview with Denise Lee Yohn, author of WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO

Q: Why did you write this book?

A: The value-creating potential of brands needs to be unleashed. Too many companies waste their time, energy, and money on advertising and marketing their brands, only to have their efforts fall short. I wanted to show a different way, a more effective, sustainable way, to build a brand – the way that great brands do it.

Q: How did you develop the brand-as-business approach to brand-building?

A: For over twenty-five years I've had the privilege of working on some of the world's greatest brands including Sony and Frito-Lay, and I've researched many others. I discovered that the most valued and admired brands shared certain distinctive, defining characteristics. In *What Great Brands Do*, I describe what I've learned and convey the tools and methods I've developed for my clients to help them achieve brand success.

Q: How is your approach different from traditional branding practices?

A: Most efforts involve creating an image to serve as the “face” of a company – creating a look and tagline to promote a business or launching a new advertising or social media campaign to reinvigorate it. But these activities simply serve to *express* a brand; great brands *execute* their brands. They elevate their brand from an external-facing message to a strategic tool for managing the business. They use their brand to shape their culture, focus their core operations, and design their customer experiences. This brand-as-business approach has proven to be far more effective than “branding.”

Q: Why is the brand-as-business approach more important now than ever before?

A: Today's consumers are very savvy and they're equipped with tools that enable them to see beneath a veneer that a company puts up, so image and reality must be closely aligned. Also in practically every sector, competition is intensifying and so companies must differentiate themselves in substantive ways and deliver real value to customers. Finally most business models no longer allow for discretionary spending, and shareholders don't tolerate it, so advertising budgets are getting squeezed but expectations for brand awareness and preference remain. The solution to all of these pressures is an integral brand strategy.

Q: Are many companies taking this integrated approach? What is holding them back?

A: Too few companies have adopted it. Some business leaders think of brands only in terms of messages and marketing tactics because that's all they know. Others are looking for a quick fix and would rather simply change what they say about themselves than change themselves. Still others understand the full business value of a brand but lack the tools and methods to realize it. This book intends to educate the first group, persuade the second, and equip the last.

Q: Can you name a few companies that epitomize the brand-as-business approach, and why?

A: Starbucks has taken an integral approach to building its brand: starting with making manager and barista engagement a top priority, fostering an emotional connection with customers, and delivering delightful experiences at every touchpoint. The Container Store also stands out for the way it has used its Foundation

Principles to create a distinctive customer experience and align and focus everyone who works on the business on delivering it.

Q: Can you share an example of how your approach has produced real business results?

A: Higher profit margins, greater customer loyalty, and lower operating costs are enjoyed by many of the great brands mentioned in my book. One specific example of business results comes from Firehouse Subs, a fast casual sandwich chain. One of the tangible manifestations of its brand-as-business approach is the Public Safety Foundation through which the company donates funds and lifesaving equipment and provides disaster assistance and educational opportunities to public safety groups. Units that have engaged most actively in the Foundation have generated 28% higher sales performance than those that have not. Given results like this, Firehouse's CEO credits the approach with putting the chain at the top of its category's growth and performance.

Q: Who do you hope will read this book, and what can they expect to take away from it?

A: *What Great Brands Do* is for CEOs, COOs, entrepreneurs, and other leaders – people who have the responsibility – and the desire -- to grow their organizations. The book challenges the conventional rhetoric about brands and teaches the essential brand-building principles and tools.