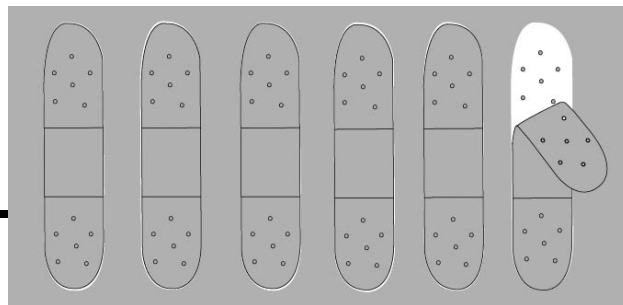


UNSTUCK

Use the *Brand-As-Business*
Management Approach to
Troubleshoot Your Business



Adapted from the bestselling book
What Great Brands Do

Denise Lee Yohn

Feeling stuck? Experiencing a problem but can't identify the solution? Use this guide to troubleshoot your business.

In *What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles That Separate the Best from the Rest* (Jossey-Bass), I introduced the **brand-as-business** management approach. And in *Extraordinary Experiences*, I showed how great retail and restaurant brands use it to develop and deliver great customer experiences.

In the brand-as-business management approach, your brand is the central organizing and operating idea of your business. It involves identifying the key values and attributes that define your brand and then using your brand to drive, align, and guide everything your organization does.

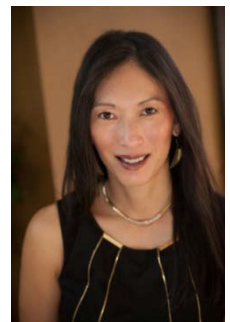
Brand as business is a universal approach and relevant to virtually all business problems. It can help you re-think the business issues you're facing and help you frame your response.

What follows are **six prevalent business issues and the solutions offered by the brand-as-business approach**. You may be all too familiar with some of the problems, while others might prompt you to look at your situation differently – all are intended to help you troubleshoot your business and identify potential solutions. This guide is not a comprehensive management resource nor can it replace the thorough, targeted consultation of an experienced advisor. Rather, use it to generate new insights about your business and to learn about the brand-as-business management approach.

Then, learn more about brand as business by reading, or re-reading, [What Great Brands Do](#) – and of course, feel free to call on me (<http://deniseleeyohn.com/contact>) to explore how I might help you get unstuck.

Choose to be great!

denise



1. We're not growing as fast as we want to.

Stalled or slow growth can often be attributed to not generating enough customer demand. Either not enough people know about your brand and/or not enough people think what you offer is relevant or valuable.

Diagnose the problem:

- *Are you focused on a discrete customer target?* Clarity about who you want as customers -- and who don't -- allows you to focus your efforts on attracting the right people instead of spreading your efforts and their impact too thinly. The brand-as-business management approach is based on valuing different customers differently because your brand essence, values, and personality will resonate with some people more than others. By not wasting your time, money, or energy chasing after everyone else, you can achieve faster growth.
- *Do you appeal to customers' specific needs and drivers?* Uncovering what your ideal customers really want is critical to developing a relevant and compelling positioning for your brand and offering. The key is to apply *needs-state based segmentation* to understand customers' specific needs and then use those insights to make a targeted appeal. Needs-states identify several needs that a single person may have in different situations and reveal specific purchase drivers for you to appeal to. When what you offer resonates uniquely and specifically with what customers want, you can ward off competitive encroachment and steal more share.
- *Are you conveying your brand's ultimate value?* Ask yourself "what business are we really in?" and then answer the question more broadly than by naming a product category or business type. When you frame what you're selling with the higher-order value you create for customers -- the value that resonates emotionally and enhances their lives beyond the functionality of a single product -- you appeal to them in new ways and generate new demand.

Brand as business enables you to foster customer intimacy, differentiate and position your brand, and redefine people's expectations. You can not only capture untapped share in your current category but also you unlock potential growth in new ones.

Learn more about the solutions:

- see Chapter Four, **Great Brands Don't Chase Customers**, page 99, of *What Great Brands Do*
- see Chapter Four, **Costco Serves Customers by Refusing to Chase Them**, page 38 of *Extraordinary Experiences*
- read my Harvard Business Review piece [What Shake Shack Knows about Growth that McDonald's Has Forgotten](#)
- read my Forbes piece [Great Brands Aim For Customers' Hearts, Not Their Wallets](#)

2. We need to deliver a more consistent, seamless customer experience.

Disjointed, cumbersome customer experiences usually reflect strategic prioritization, organization design, and/or employee engagement issues. All of these produce disconnects that customers have to navigate around or they simply refuse to do so and take their business elsewhere.

Diagnose the problem:

- *How do you design your customer experiences?* When you set goals and strategies by product, your sales results and product efficacy become the priorities in the customer experience. While these are important, the lack of a unifying vision and strategy across all efforts often results in pricing, product information or availability, service delivery, and user experience inconsistencies. Brand as business relies on the Customer Experience Architecture framework to develop consistent experiences that are unified by your brand vision and an overarching customer experience strategy and are designed with your customers' needs and desires as the priority.
- *Do you operate in organizational siloes?* Traditionally-designed companies are established and run according to product line (e.g., an electronics company is organized by audio products, home theater systems, mobile gadgets, etc.) or business function (e.g., a retailer might have buying, store operations, e-commerce, and marketing groups.) Siloed organizations produce siloed customer experiences. An alternate way to view and run your operations is provided by a Brand Touchpoint Wheel, a visual representation of all the touchpoints between your brand and the outside world and the various employee groups that impact each of them. It can be used to align disparate efforts to produce greater impact on and engagement with customers at every touchpoint.
- *Do all employees see their roles in producing on-brand customer experiences?* While employees in customer-facing roles may be committed to delivering optimal customer experiences, others may not be. The brand-as-business management approach starts with engaging every employee with your brand, helping them embrace, understand, interpret, and appropriately reinforce the brand in everything they do. A Brand Touchpoint Wheel can open people's eyes to their impact on brand perceptions and Brand Engagement Sessions engage them with their heads (so they know what's important), hearts (so they are motivated to make changes), and hands and feet (so they do the right thing).

The execution tools in the brand-as-business approach prioritize your brand as the unifying element of your customer experiences, and they facilitate one clear, consistent, common understanding of your brand among all employees so they work together to deliver on it across customer experiences.

Learn more about the solutions:

- see Chapter Five, Great Brands Sweat the Small Stuff, page 125, of *What Great Brands Do*
- see Chapter Five, PIRCH Fulfills Its Brand Vision One Detail at a Time, page 47, of *Extraordinary Experiences*
- download the Customer Experience Architecture [framework](#) and [worksheet](#) to guide you through the steps of developing and using one
- read my Forbes piece [Five Ways to Win on Customer Experience](#)
- read my ChangeThis Manifesto, [It's Still the Experience, Stupid!](#)

3. We aren't as innovative as the current environment requires.

Today, innovation involves more than identifying new product ideas. It requires looking at customers, customer experiences, and trends differently.

Diagnose the problem:

- *How well do you understand your customers?* Are you going beyond the expected answers generated in surveys and focus groups and digging beneath the surface with your customers? With a deep, intuitive customer understanding, you can anticipate, and in some cases create, customer needs. The brand-as-business approach to customer insights relies on anthropological research methodologies, such as observing and interacting with customers in situ or putting yourself in customers' shoes to understand the way they live and experience your products. Uniquely valuable market insights drive uniquely valuable innovations.
- *Does your customer experience differentiate your brand?* Customer experience is perhaps the richest innovation platform today since most companies are still only focused on getting the basics right. Your customer experiences are probably comprised of hundreds of touchpoints. You can use a Brand Touchpoint Wheel to identify those touchpoints that require customers to make sacrifices or create workarounds and those that are overlooked by your competitors or executed by everyone in the same way. This will point to areas ripe for innovation.
- *Are you focused on following trends?* Following trends might seem like the best way to stay relevant, but it often leads you to do what everyone else is doing and keeps you from discovering truly disruptive innovations. Instead, seek to advance your own movements and create your own markets. *Scanning* (continuously monitoring different media, cultural developments, and the activities in and outside of your category, and identify the meanings behind them) and *listening* (using social networks to identify cultural influences) are among the brand-as-business methods that will help you identify powerful ideas on the horizon and discover ways to advance them.

Competitive advantage comes from looking at the same things in different ways. When you understand your customers intuitively, design your customer experiences distinctively, and utilize your cultural context creatively, you unleash powerful innovation capabilities.

Learn more about the solutions:

- see Chapter Three, Great Brands Ignore Trends, page 71, of *What Great Brands Do*
- see Chapter Three, Buffalo Wild Wings Wins by Choosing a Different Path, page 29, of *Extraordinary Experiences*
- download a [template](#) of a Brand Touchpoint Wheel and [worksheet](#) to guide you through the steps of assembling and using one
- read my CX Journey piece [A Great Customer Experience Isn't Enough](#)
- read my Forbes piece [Why Marketers Need To Stop Following Trends And Start Advancing Movements](#)

4. We can't decide which new business opportunities to prioritize.

Start-ups and small businesses usually don't lack opportunities to grow, but they do lack the right approach to deciding which ones are the best to pursue.

Diagnose the problem:

- *Is your brand essence or purpose clear?* Specifying and clearly articulating your brand's reason for being is the necessary first step when evaluating growth prospects. Use your brand essence or purpose as your North Star, choosing new markets, products, channels, and partners based on whether or not they keep you on track. The brand-as-business management approach draws upon several exercises to help you identify or clarify your brand core, including writing your *brand's obituary* (to crystallize the value your brand contributes to the world) and determining your *brand archetype* (to understand the role your brand plays in people's lives.)
- *Have you determined which customers are your most ideal ones?* To produce sustainable growth, use needs-based customer segmentation to dissect the market and seek out only those customers who share your brand's values and value your brand attributes and personality. Not only does this selectivity reinforce your brand identity, but also it enables you to focus on developing new products, services, and experiences tailored to meet your most valuable customers' discrete needs. You'll uncover the best new ways to inspire their loyalty and increase your profitability.
- *How committed are you to the core of your brand?* Start-ups usually succeed by doing a few things really well. But as companies grow, the pressure to produce short-term results and the pull to imitate the successful practices of others induces many to lose that focus. Resisting these temptations and being willing to turn down opportunities that distract you from your brand core is the key to making the right growth decisions. Brand-as-business keeps you on track by distinguishing between what your organization is *made* to do vs. what it is *able* to do. The former leverages your core competencies and existing customer relationships, while the latter can dilute both.

The brand-as-business management approach introduces a brand ethic to strategic planning and new business decision-making. The right growth opportunities are those that pass through your brand filter.

Learn more about the solutions:

- see Chapter Six, Great Brands Commit and Stay Committed, page 155, of *What Great Brands Do*
- see Chapter Six, Jason's Deli Is Committed to Its Core, page 55, of *Extraordinary Experiences*
- read my Harvard Business Review piece [Write Your Brand's Obituary](#)
- read my QSR Magazine piece [Bigger Isn't Always Better](#)

5. Social media is causing us to lose control over how our brand is perceived.

The addition of outside voices to the conversation about your brand can either hurt or help your brand perceptions -- it depends on whether or not you actively cultivate brand relationships and brand integrity.

Diagnose the problem:

- *Are your actions aligned with your communications?* Organizations come under social media fire when their advertising and other communications promise one thing, but their actual experience delivers another. But when you put your brand at the center of your business and use it to drive and guide everything you do, there is no disconnect between what you say and what you do. Your brand is communicated and delivered consistently at every touchpoint, in every channel. You are well-positioned and protected when your company is put under the microscope of skeptical and critical consumers.
- *Are you leveraging the power of your brand ambassadors?* Employees and other stakeholders like vendors, agencies, and distributors can be influential ambassadors for your brand in the community and on social media *if* they are educated, engaged, and empowered appropriately. When you start brand-building by cultivating a strong brand-led company culture, you help your stakeholders understand your mission, vision, and values. Develop and deploy a Brand Toolbox of content and decision guides to explain the attitudes and behaviors that support your brand. Conduct Brand Engagement Sessions featuring hands-on exercises and immersive experiences to ensure brand understanding is followed with appropriate actions and brand advocacy by all.
- *How do you create positive social impact?* Corporate social responsibility is a popular trend in business these days because companies want to project the image of having a positive impact on society and to protect themselves from criticism. And cause marketing initiatives and charitable donations can help improve brand perceptions in the short-term. But these efforts can't insulate your brand from scrutiny and you can't avoid criticism if your regular business practices are not above reproach. If you design and run your business to produce positive social change -- in the way you treat your employees, minimize your impact on the environment, produce results for the communities you do business in, and/or advance movements that reduce inequality and injustice -- external influencers will only validate your efforts and increase your brand equity.

In today's environment, brand control is less important than brand integrity. You can cultivate brand integrity with the tools and principles of the brand-as-business management approach.

Learn more about the solutions:

- see Chapter Seven, Great Brands Never Have to "Give Back," page 183, of *What Great Brands Do*
- see Chapter Seven, sweetgreen Serves Society with More Than Salads, page 63, of *Extraordinary Experiences*
- read my Harvard Business Review piece, [Great Brands Never Have to "Give Back"](#)
- read my QSR Magazine piece [The Truth About Transparency](#)

6. Employee morale is low.

Many companies are struggling to keep their workforces engaged, motivated, and aligned. Your brand is actually your most powerful tool to solve these employee engagement problems.

Diagnose the problem:

□ *Have you engaged your people with a compelling brand purpose or essence?* Your brand should inspire customers and employees alike, and your organization should have a unique and meaningful reason for being. When you adopt and share with employees a brand purpose or essence that transcends the specific product(s) you sell and the financial goals you've set, you connect what they do on a daily basis to the bigger picture and longer term objectives. You give meaning to their work, which sustains morale far more effectively than perks and parties.

□ *Are you cultivating a strong brand-led culture?* Have you clearly defined your core brand values and do you use them to educate, engage, and empower your people? Brand as business starts brand-building inside, ensuring everyone shares one common understanding of your brand and applies it in their daily decisions and actions. This creates powerful employee connections:

1. employees connect to *customers* more effectively because they understand the unique value the company produces and delivers to them.
2. employees connect to *each other* more fully because they are united by a common objective and common set of values.
3. employees connect to *the brand's higher purpose* and their work holds more meaning and importance to them because they see their own roles in the broader mission of the organization.

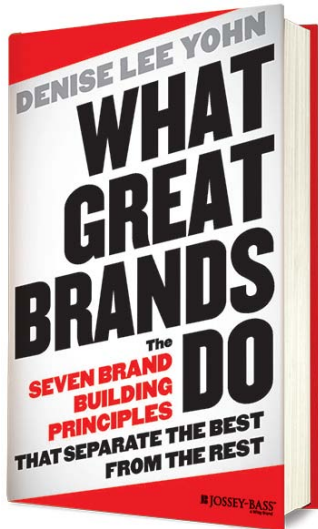
□ *Do you operate with maximum impact and integrity?* Employees see through surface-level social responsibility efforts as much as customers do, if not more. They find it disingenuous when companies make grand gestures in the outside world but are careless about how they behave on the inside. It's de-motivating when business leaders go out of their way for customers but don't apply the same respect and service-mindset to employees. The brand-as-business management approach favors *CSV* -- creating shared value -- over *CSR* -- corporate social responsibility. *CSV* involves designing and operating your business in a way that benefits everyone involved -- customers, employees, investors, partners, and communities.

Brand as business gives employees' work a more meaningful purpose, helps them understand the importance of their role in achieving an important vision, and increases their respect for their company and its leaders.

Learn more about the solutions:

- see Chapter One, Great Brands Start Inside, page 19, of *What Great Brands Do*
- see Chapter One, Popeyes' Priority Produces Profits, page 14, of *Extraordinary Experiences*
- read my Harvard Business Review piece, [Your Company Culture Shouldn't Just Be Great—It Should Be Distinctive](#)
- read my TDKA post, [The Secret Sauce of Employee Recruiting and Engagement](#)

One of Inc. Magazine's 2014 Top Marketing Books: *What Great Brands Do*



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Discover proven strategies for building powerful, world-class brands in this 800-CEO-READ bestseller.

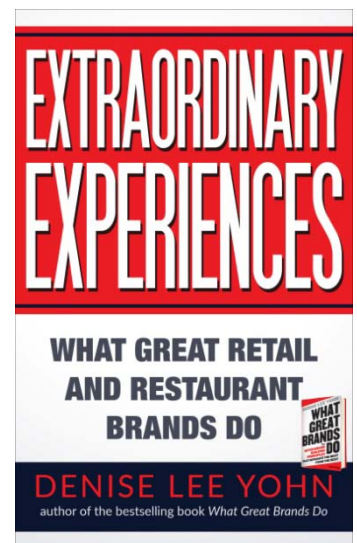
Packed with insightful case studies from companies like Starbucks, GE, and IKEA, *What Great Brands Do* (Jossey-Bass) explains how top companies develop standout brands that foster customer loyalty and increase profit margins. Brand-building expert Denise Lee Yohn translates these studies into actionable guidelines by sharing the seven major principles that are essential for brand excellence. Get your copy and start learning how to use your brand not just to gain a competitive edge, but to change the game completely.

New Book:

Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do

Get the E-Book Now

Extraordinary Experiences by Denise Lee Yohn profiles seven great retail and restaurant brands and shows how they earn customer love and loyalty by creatively designing and consistently delivering great retail customer experiences. Compelling stories and practical principles make *Extraordinary Experiences* required reading for all business leaders who want a great brand.

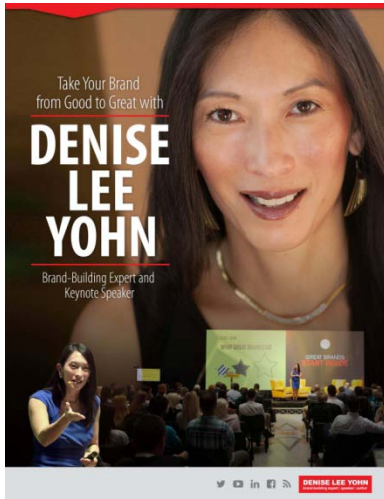


Special offers on bulk purchases or combos of both books are available.

Contact Denise: <http://deniseleeyohn.com/contact>

Invite Keynote Speaker Denise Lee Yohn to Inspire & Teach Your Group

What Great Brands Do



"Attendees Were Blown Away"

Canada Tourism Commission

"Not Only Inspiring But Highly Actionable"

E & J Gallo

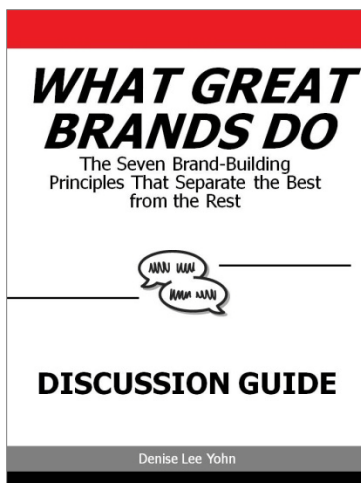
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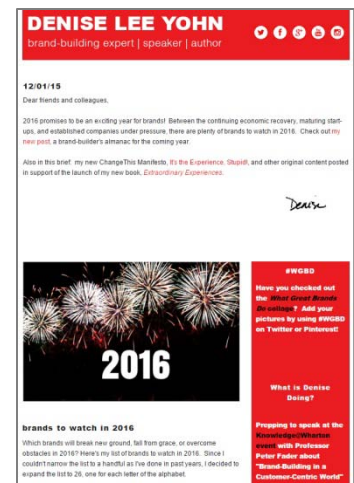
Brand Assessment

Does your organization practice the brand/communications management approach?

10 key brand and communication practices are ranked on the scale below for the best brands.

Practice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The organization has a clear brand purpose and a clear value proposition.										
The organization has a clear brand identity.										
The organization has a clear brand positioning.										
The organization has a clear brand personality.										
The organization has a clear brand voice.										
The organization has a clear brand promise.										
The organization has a clear brand experience.										
The organization has a clear brand community.										
The organization has a clear brand ecosystem.										
The organization has a clear brand architecture.										
The organization has a clear brand strategy.										
The organization has a clear brand implementation.										
The organization has a clear brand monitoring.										
The organization has a clear brand reporting.										
The organization has a clear brand governance.										
The organization has a clear brand compliance.										
The organization has a clear brand risk management.										
The organization has a clear brand crisis management.										
The organization has a clear brand recovery.										

[Brand
Assessment](#)



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