

brand chef

6 ingredients for
whipping up
**profitable brand
messaging** that
**your audience
will devour**



Flesh and Brand

Hi there, and thanks for downloading my eBook!

I know you're a busy person, that's why I've made this book as lean as possible. Fluff belongs in your marshmallows and in your pillows—not in your content—so I've combed through this eBook and omitted anything unnecessary.

I only ask for your undivided attention in return.

I've listed two tips below to help make this an enjoyable reading experience for you:

First, I ask that you go somewhere quiet and unplug yourself from all distractions: cell phone, social media, email, television, Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, etc. Everything. For 30 minutes. Make sure you're nice and comfy, and kick your feet up while you're at it!

Second, there are a lot of food analogies in this book, so if your stomach is rumbling as you're reading this sentence, you should pause and fix yourself a snack before you dive into the “meaty” parts of this guide. Sorry, I couldn't help myself.

Sound good? Let's get started.

Brand Appétit!

what **leaders** are saying about brand chef...



"Your book's great. It's extremely in-depth, and your questions really got me thinking! I wrote pages of personal notes about ryze's personality, language, promise, usp, repetition, "skin", etc., as I was reading.

Your writing is super unique, and I love the passion that flows into/out of it. Really well done, Taheerah. You should be proud." :)

Jason "J-Ryze" Fonceca, Founder of [Ryze Online](#), Empire Design
for Ambitious Creatives

what's the skinny on brand chef?

Why do so many experts overcomplicate branding?

They fire off terms like “brand architecture” and “brand equity” without explanation, leaving you to wonder if they’re discussing skyscrapers and the stock market or building a brand that your audience will bond with.

It can be a bit confusing and ridiculous at times.

Don’t get me wrong; I’m not going to act as if I don’t use branding terms myself because I do. But I believe that if you use jargon foreign to people outside your industry, you should present that terminology in relatable language.

That’s one of the main reasons I created this eBook: I wanted to demystify brand messaging and spare you the gobbledygook that runs rampant within the industry.

Because the truth is that branding isn’t complicated at all.

The key to brand messaging has nothing to do with glossy ads, shiny logos, and million-dollar budgets paid to Madison Avenue agencies to increase awareness. (The truth is you can’t *accurately* measure how much more aware people are of your brand today versus six weeks ago or even six days ago.)

Cooking up a savory brand is simple: it’s all about creating a recipe from the ingredients you already possess.

will this eBook whet your palate?

Before you sink your teeth into any more content vittles, I want to remind you how much I value your time. And the last thing I want to do is waste it, so before I go any further if you're the type of person who:

- 🍳 Automatically follows your industry's "best practices" without proving their validity
- 🍳 Bases your marketing off industry leader advice rather than blazing a trail of your own
- 🍳 Only praises conventional thinking and turns your nose at anything challenging the status quo...

...you should stop reading this report and save yourself 30 minutes.

Still reading? Cool.

You should also know that I use colorful metaphors, a conversational tone (with dashes of slang thrown in for good measure) and that my language is sometimes salty.

Now that we've gotten the disclaimers out of the way, I'm going to share with you three marketing principles that I use to make money for myself and my clients:

- 1) I don't do things exactly like everyone else. I scrutinize what the majority are doing and ask myself, "Can I get better results by taking a detour from the norm?" The answer I almost always arrive at is, "Yes."
- 2) I believe personal setbacks and hardships can be advantages in disguise, and you can (and should) put a positive spin on anything negative that's affected you.

3) I believe in celebrating your individuality. One of the keys to building an audience is making your brand relatable to the *right* people.

I've studied and compared numerous brands over the years and different types of branding (direct response vs. traditional advertising). I've isolated a half-dozen lip-smacking ingredients that go into a successful brand.

Are these the *only* factors?

No. But these six have consistently popped up on my radar, and since I'm not one to ignore patterns, I paid close attention and took oodles of notes.

I've also used these six elements to create branding for my clients and myself.

what brand chef will teach you:

reliable: serve up consistent happiness for your audience. Isn't it great to expect to get something you love and receive something you hate instead? Neither do your customers. Learn how to keep them coming through your doors every time instead of running for the hills.

honorable: does your brand leave a bad taste in your customers' mouths? The one thing that murders your credibility faster than anything else (and how to prevent this disaster from happening in the first place).

measurable: know the impact of your spice. Did you know that you can gauge how effective your brand is? Contrary to popular belief, a measurable brand isn't an oxymoron or a unicorn.

offbeatable: mix up your signature flavor. Your eyes aren't deceiving you—offbeatable *isn't* a real word. But the concept behind it is. More importantly, it's an essential ingredient for a powerful brand.

repeatable: bake your story into every medium you use. When it comes to your competition, it's a dog-eat-dog world. Find out how repetition and brand message patterns can help keep your company from becoming the entrée du jour.

relatable: show 'em what's underneath your apron. Peel off that suit and let your audience get up close and personal. (I promise this isn't as awkward or creepy as it sounds.)

I'm going to kick things off by dispelling the following myth:

"It's not what you say about yourself, it's what others say about you."

Many marketers have recited this mantra. You may have even rattled it off once or twice (I know I have). But there's a problem with this phrase:

It's only half-true.

A more accurate statement would be: "It's not just about what *others* say about you; it's also about what *you* instruct them to say."

I'll let you in on a little secret: **You can control how your audience sees you and, to a large degree, what they say about you.**

Perception is reality, and you can influence and shape others' perceptions of you and your company.

Before you ask, no, this eBook doesn't contain any black magic spells or Jedi mind-control tricks.

I also steer clear of unethical tactics, so you'll be able to use this guide *and* sleep like a baby at night— 100 percent guilt-free!

There's nothing mysterious about anything that I will share with you. Many successful companies and individuals have used these methods for years with phenomenal results.

Yet many B2B and B2C professionals ignore these powerful yet simple strategies.

So, why do so many companies miss out on these opportunities?

Because they're too busy trying to prove they're the smartest cookies in their industry.

Every marketer I know of is guilty of this to some degree, including me. We believe that the road to success is paved with copious amounts of competence. The company with the brainiest employees always wins, right?

Like my Nana used to say, “That’s a load of bunk.”

I can almost hear you scoff at my sentiment but bear with me for a moment. I’m not saying that intelligence doesn’t matter. It goes without saying that you need to know what the hell you’re doing, or you won’t be in business for long.

I am saying that when you build a strong brand, you can get away with occasional blunders and goofs.

Think about Apple for a minute. I’m not going to gush about them for too long because I know every business book, blog, podcast, and magazine on the planet cite their genius to death. But it’s no coincidence that they’re a perennial darling of the marketing world.

Apple *is* one of the most successful brands on the planet. However, its product launches remind me of the movie “Arachnophobia” because they’re buggy as hell. The company even has issues with updates it makes to its *existing* software. (Remember the iOS 8.0 fail of September 2014?)

But does that stop people from camping outside the Apple Store for hours (sometimes days) before the launch?

No.

Do Apple’s sales take a dramatic swan dive when thousands of disgruntled buyers take to their keyboards to voice their complaints about these glaring errors?

No.

Do these mistakes leave a permanent black mark on the company's reputation?

Nope, because fans know that it's par for the course.

Why do consumers continue to endure Apple's careless mistakes? Why aren't they seething with anger or shaking their fists in righteous indignation?

Because Apple fanboys and gals are so excited to get the latest gadget in their hot little hands that they're willing to suffer through whatever mishaps the company hurls at them.

They're also enamored with Apple because of **who** the company represents:

The trailblazers. The cool kids. The misfits.

And they want everyone to know that they were the first to score the newest iWhatever so they can identify with one of these three groups.

But you're not Apple.

If you're not in the gadget space, you may think, "Um, I'm not in the business of high-tech toys for adults. No one will whip themselves into a froth over what I have to offer."

Au contraire, mon ami, that's where you're wrong.

See, brand success is less about what you're selling and more about how crazy your customers are about you.

Remember the 1997 "Think Different" commercials? These ads, which revived and redefined Apple's iconic status, were created

by ad agency creatives who were also [long-time Apple enthusiasts](#).

That makes sense, right? Who else would fight tooth and claw to bring Apple back from the brink of obscurity than those who were already emotionally invested in the brand? We all wish we had fans that devoted.

The good news? They're not nearly as hard to round up as you think.

You, too, can create a base of enthusiastic followers by telling your audience who you are, what you're about, and most importantly, why all of this benefits *them*.

It doesn't matter if you've been in business for 20 months or 20 years, it's never too late to overhaul your branding to outshine your competition and to carve out a new category of your own. Let's dive in and tackle the first ingredient on the list, shall we?

reliable: serve up consistent happiness for your audience

“You always really *have to remain consistent in your* beliefs and *philosophy*.” – Mark Messier

If you love grub like me, you probably have at least one favorite restaurant that you go to. One of my favorites is *Basso56*, an Italian restaurant in Midtown Manhattan. I used to go there so often that I was on a first-name basis with the owner.

So why, out of the *hundreds* of Italian restaurants in NYC, would I continue to regularly frequent the same joint?

One word: consistency.

Their food is always scrumptious, their service is impeccable, and the atmosphere is always inviting. The staff makes you feel like you're a long-lost friend instead of a patron.

They serve up their best every time I step through their doors.

If you give your fans a memorable experience and make them feel good every time you sell them a product or service, they won't even consider going to anyone else.

Your clients need reassurance that you don't have the staying power of a memorable one-night stand: a world-rocking experience never to be repeated. People don't like surprises when they're footing the bill; they crave consistency because trust is already baked into the experience.

Think about the brands you love. Chances are you've been a loyal customer for some of the reasons I've listed above.

Now think about the brands that you've abandoned.

They may have had real potential initially, but after some time the quality waned or the experience fell short, and you quickly found yourself seeking an alternative.

I had another restaurant that was a favorite of mine in the past, but I stopped opening my wallet for them long ago.

Why?

Because they stopped giving a damn.

Their food was more miss than hit, and their service was abysmal. It was a mess.

I'll never forget the night that I officially parted ways with them.

I was craving Spaghetti Carbonara. I needed this dish like my left arm and made a beeline for the restaurant.

I sat down at my table, and all I could think about was the happy dance my taste buds would do when the food hit my tongue.

The server placed the plate in front of me, and I shoveled a heaping forkful into my mouth and waited for the bacon-infused bliss to wash over me.

But it never happened.

The sauce was a clumpy sea of salt and oil, and the pasta was so mushy it practically dissolved in my mouth.

But the bitter taste of disappointment was harder to swallow than the food. That culinary nightmare marked my last visit to that restaurant.

This letdown is the opposite of what you want for your customers, so you must ensure that your brand consistently

delivers a similar, enjoyable customer experience across all your marketing mediums.

showcase some (not all) of your tastes

I've already mentioned that one of the biggest pitfalls of brand measurement is inconsistency. This is because many companies don't invest enough time into figuring out what it is and what it stands for.

The most crucial ingredient that goes into branding is YOU!

Instead of creating a separate persona for your business, you should mold your brand around your real-life personality.

When your brand's personality mirrors yours, it's hard to veer off course because you're being yourself.

But in real life, your personality isn't something you can summarize in one word or neatly unpack into a box. Your personality is like a parfait, and each layer is packed with different flavors and textures stacked on top of each other.

It's up to you to decide which part(s) of your unique personality you want to display.

How much should you reveal? That depends on your preference. You can peel back the onion over time or go buck wild at the beginning. It's up to you, your goals, and the type of audience you're trying to reel in.

Here are two questions to consider when you're concocting your personality:

- 📦 What personality would you like to assign to your brand (analytical, über professional, provocative, etc.)?
- 📦 How are you going to express this personality to your audience? For example, if your brand is provocative, how do you use language to shock people?

These are a sample of the spices that will give your brand a different flavor than everyone else in your category.

If you're reading this, you probably own a company, and unless you're an army of one, there are probably other people involved with your business.

So, how do you tackle a multi-personality company brand?

To determine which traits best define your business, ask your employees to sum up what the company represents to them in one word. Then ask them to vote for their top three choices. Go through the results and pick the three that are most popular *and* are also an accurate representation of your company.

honorable: does your brand leave a bad taste in your customers' mouths?

"If honor were profitable, everybody would be honorable." – Thomas Moore

Imagine it's Monday afternoon, and you've scheduled a one o'clock appointment with your client. You spend 20 minutes prepping for the call; before you know it, it's 1 PM. And your client is nowhere to be found.

"I'm sure they'll call me in the next few minutes," you say and busy yourself with a task. Fifteen minutes later, your phone still gives you the silent treatment, so you tackle another task. And another, until you lose track of time.

You finally look at the clock and see that it's now 2 PM, and you haven't heard so much as a peep from your elusive time bandit.

"What the hell!?" you say, "They had plenty of time to tell me they weren't going to show up beforehand. Don't they realize that my time is just as valuable as theirs?"

This has probably happened to you both professionally and personally. Sometimes the other party has a valid excuse for forgetting. Sometimes they don't. Either way, you feel let down.

And it sucks.

Nothing murders credibility faster than saying one thing and doing another. Unreliability breeds mistrust, and mistrust spawns many things that are guaranteed to bring your business to a screeching halt.

Your word is your bond, and your bond cements you to your readers. Going back on your promise can devastate your customers because they'll feel you're not upfront with them. And you risk them labeling you as a fraud.

And you know what happens when people think you're a phony, right?

They talk. A lot.

And they'll ensure their chatter spreads across the internet like wildfire so they can warn others about you.

And trust me, that's NOT the kind of buzz you want humming around your business.

This is a lesson that Chip Wilson, founder of yoga clothing brand Lululemon Athletica, no doubt wishes he had learned before his net worth plummeted 47percent.

lululemon sours on their promise

"Product quality is the foundation we stand on; we build it with a relentless focus on three key areas: fabric, performance, and craftsmanship."

This is part of Lululemon's promise on their site, and for years, they upheld this declaration—until 2013.

The premier yoga company that convinced women worldwide that the journey to enlightenment should be made in a pair of \$100 yoga pants suffered a severe snafu in March 2013. The company recalled 17 percent of their black pants because the fabric was too sheer.

Some women reported that when they attempted to return the pants to the Lululemon stores, they were asked by employees to put the pants on and to bend over so the staff could determine just how sheer they were.

(Pro tip: asking your patrons to give you a peep show to justify refunding them isn't the best PR strategy.)

Rather than take responsibility for this glaring oversight, Mr. Wilson went on Bloomberg TV and provided a riveting theory of his own: his customers' wide haunches. "Some women's bodies don't work for the pants," he said. "It's really about the rubbing through the thighs, how much pressure is there over a period of time."

His response went over about as well as you'd expect.

He then followed up his analysis with a less-than-ideal public apology, in which he apologized to his employees for the hot water his statements landed the company in—but failed to address or acknowledge the customers he had previously insulted.

A financial backlash ensued. The company's stock plummeted by nearly a third, and Mr. Wilson's net worth of over \$4 billion whittled down to around \$2.1 billion. Company execs convinced him to stop flapping his gums in public to prevent him from hemorrhaging more of his empire (a pity). (He's since stepped down as company chairman.)

The media had a field day and labeled his sentiment "the worst apology ever." Comedians everywhere rejoiced at Wilson's foot-in-mouth disease and sat back while their [jokes practically wrote themselves](#).

Whether you've made an appointment with a colleague or made a promise to your customers, you must follow through on your word once you make a commitment.

Not once. Not twice. Every freaking time.

Or risk losing their trust. And once that trust vanishes like the fabric on the seat of lululemon's yoga pants, you can kiss it goodbye forever.

What's the key to making a promise that you can keep? Make it believable. Ask yourself, *"What's the single most important thing that my customers desire, and how can I assure them that I'll be able to deliver that?"*

Keep your promise long on sincerity (with proof, if possible) and short on hype, and you'll bag yourself a winner.

measurable: know the impact of your spice

“Measure what is measurable and make measurable what is not so.” – Galileo Galilei

Branding should be measurable.

And I don't mean measurable as in social media shares and likes. Those don't count. If you go that route, you may as well include unicorns, leprechauns, and rainbows in your analytics.

Social media is helpful for getting real-time feedback from your clients or customers and observing what people are saying about you and your company. This is a hell of a lot more insightful than a thumbs up or a retweet.

When I say measurable, I mean your audience should be able to pinpoint what makes you different or downright kooky compared to the others in your space.

And you should be able to tell how much of an impact that difference makes on your stats and profits.

When your brand stands out, your prospects can tell you exactly why they contacted you over your competition. You should know what percentage of these qualified leads are directly linked to your messaging.

Branding gets a terrible rap because many outside the industry consider it a steaming load of overpriced bullshit that's impossible to measure.

The truth is when you create branding that's personal and ask your audience the right questions, you'd be surprised at the feedback that you get back.

When you include your saga within your online and offline campaigns, you'll also have cold, hard stats that will show you how strong your connection to your audience is.

In addition to the numbers, a deeply personal brand also showers you with anecdotal evidence and warm fuzzies like online comments and emails that you receive from people clamoring to attend your offline events. Some may confess that they invested in your products or services because they admire who *you* are and what you stand for because it aligns with who *they* are (or aspire to be), which brings me to ingredient number four on this list: offbeatable.

offbeatable: mix up your signature flavor

“If you don’t tell your customer what the difference is, your customer will decide for you.” – David Brier

Imagine the following scenario:

You have a problem weighing on you like a dozen bricks across your shoulders. This problem is wreaking havoc on your waking life and flooding your body with so much cortisol you can barely sleep. Desperate for a solution, you attack Google and begin frantically researching.

You scour close to a dozen companies, and after spending what feels like an eternity, you select five for your shortlist. So far, so good. You feel one step closer to ridding yourself of this nightmare...

...at least that’s what you thought before comparing these contenders side-by-side.

The problem? All these companies are similar across the board: near-identical messages, comparable talent, competence levels, and client results. Even their testimonials echo each other. Yikes.

The only discernible differences are their logos, website colors, and URLs.

In other words, every single one of them is a commodity. So, which one of these clones should you give your precious time and moolah to?

That's easy, whoever's the cheapest.

This works to your advantage when you're the consumer. The problem is that your customers are using the same process to evaluate you, which begs the following question:

Do you know what separates your company from everyone else in your space?

Unfortunately, if you don't highlight the difference for your prospects, they'll view you as a dime-a-dozen vendor they can use, abuse, and quickly discard the moment a cheaper competitor surfaces on their radar.

And if they believe you're disposable, you can forget about ever charging premium prices or developing a distinct reputation.

They'll never feel they need to give a damn about you because you haven't given them any reason to.

But you can turn things around because you have more control than you think. It's all about changing how your audience sees you. Rewiring their perception can be as easy (and fun) as dreaming up a new flavor.

Chef Tip #2:


Determine if you're getting your \$'s worth from your branding.

Ask your prospects the following three questions about your messaging to find out:

- 1) Does our messaging give you any insight into who we are as a company and as people? Did this have any impact on your decision to reach out to us?
- 2) How long did it take for you to contact us after you read through our website? (Hours, days, weeks, months, etc.)
- 3) Did you feel that our messaging addressed your main concerns and goals?

start your flavor sensation

“I’m a total weirdo and have often felt like an outcast and a freak, and I love that. It makes things so much more exciting.” – Zoe Kravitz

Don’t just brand yourself away from the competition. Brand yourself into your own category. 

You don’t have to create a novel concept to achieve this. All you have to do is develop a twist on an existing idea.

For example, there’s no need to reinvent ice cream when you can invent a bolder flavor.

That’s much easier to accomplish, don’t you think?

Imagine that your industry is vanilla ice cream. There’s nothing wrong with vanilla ice cream; I think it’s delicious, and so do millions of others.

But it’s a commodity.

Think about the ingredients in vanilla ice cream: milk, cream, sugar, salt, and vanilla extract. You can find *all* of these items in *any* grocery store across the country.

It’s easy to find this flavor because it’s easy to make--and duplicate.

Why am I comparing your industry to plain vanilla ice cream? Am I implying that your industry is snore-worthy?

Not at all.

The comparison I’m making is simple: your industry must appeal to many, and vanilla seemed like a fitting analogy to represent the majority.

But unlike your industry, your company only has to appeal to a select FEW.

So what happens when you play it safe and don't stand apart from everyone else?

You suffer "death by vanilla" and drown in the bland, creamy sea.

Or you can choose to take matters into your own hands.

The great thing about vanilla ice cream is that you can easily alter its taste with more potent ingredients, which means you can use the vanilla as a base and add your flavors to the mix.

Let's say that you get weak in the knees for gourmet coffee and chocolate, and you decide to combine these ingredients with vanilla ice cream to create your signature flavor. After an hour of brainstorming, you've come up with a recipe for your masterpiece:

Blue Mountain coffee ice cream with swirls of Swiss dark chocolate fudge and dark chocolate-covered espresso beans.

I warned you this eBook would make you hungry, so I hope you're chowing down on a snack now.

Notice how I didn't use just any type of coffee in my example. I said Blue Mountain because it's one of the most coveted coffees in the world, and it's only grown in one place, Jamaica. That makes this coffee more exotic, and exotic grabs people's attention more than the run-of-the-mill roast they're used to.

People also pay a premium for exotic things because they're harder to get. (Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee commands a price of \$40 per pound—and that's on the *lower* end of the price scale for gourmet coffee connoisseurs, mon.)

In my example, I could have used chocolate chips instead of dark chocolate fudge, but those are a dime a dozen. And the last thing you want is for your audience to associate ordinary and regular with your brand.

Swiss dark chocolate is (arguably) the best dark chocolate in the world, and the espresso beans give the ice cream crunch and a serious jolt of java.

Talk about a 180-degree transformation from the vanilla ice cream we started with. Speaking of vanilla ice cream, where is it? Has it disappeared?

Nope, it's still there. It's part of the base for your new flavor. And that's what good branding does:

Solid branding blends industry with individuality for a signature flavor that's damn hard to copy.

Now that you know the importance of inventing your flavor within your industry, what's next?

unique selling position (usp): bring your fans to your kitchen

Wondering what the point of creating your signature flavor is?

Your flavor helps your prospects decide whether your company is the right fit for them. Plus, it helps them choose to do business with you sooner.

Prospects arriving at your site have already absorbed your competitors' information. They're probably so sick of reading the same promises, buzzwords, and rhetoric-laced mission statements that they're ready to nap.

If you want to yank the attention out of your prospect, your flavor must answer the one question that they want to know BEFORE they ever consider contacting you:

Why should we do business with you versus your competitors?

Your answer to this question is your Unique Selling Position (USP). It lets your audience know in no uncertain terms why they should hand over their hard-earned time and money to YOU.

If you want to kick ass in your industry, you must do everything possible to be an anti-commodity. Your USP is one of your brand's built-in commodity killers.

Put yourself in the mind of your prospects and ask yourself,

"What's the singular reason I should give them for working with us over everyone else in our space?"

Your answer is the foundation for your USP.

keep your language fresh

We, marketers, love our buzzwords, don't we? And we gorge ourselves on a never-ending buffet of catchphrases.

Let me preface this by saying that it's not your fault if you overuse jargon.

You've probably observed that the respected companies in your industry used these words and followed suit, right?

Good marketers *should* emulate those they respect, but only to a point. Otherwise, you risk morphing into carbon copies of those you admire. And because overusing buzzwords renders them stale.

Imagine that you bought home a piping hot loaf of sourdough bread from the bakery that was crusty on the outside and fluffy inside. Instead of eating it, you left it sitting uncovered on your countertop.

After a few days, it became so hard it could double as a blunt object and eventually decomposed into a moldy, gluten-riddled mess.

That's how buzzwords work: they start fresh, but if you rely on them too much, they'll muck up your message like fuzzy green mold spoils your bread.

Remember the term "bling" from the late '90s (which still rears its outdated head every now and again)? It didn't take long before the term made its way from the streets and into the songs on the Billboard charts, before seeping into the vocabulary of reporters on CNN, FOX News, and MSNBC.

As time passed, people began using the term as a noun, adjective, and verb. People were so enamored with the word that they said it twice (bling bling!).

But all good things must end, and it was clear that bling had [worn out](#) its sparkly welcome. (You know a slang word is on its last cool legs when you hear it spilling from the lips of cable news anchors.)

Chef Tip #3:

Understand what you're *really* selling

"You don't **need** to reinvent your business. You need to **discover the industry in which your business truly operates.**" – David Tyreman

A signature flavor helps you to define the business that you're really in.

Confused? Here's a real-life example of what I mean:

[ClearPivot](#) is an inbound marketing agency. Many of their competitors are excellent at promoting inbound marketing, often at the expense of celebrating their own uniqueness. As a result, their messaging tends to sound alike.

ClearPivot targets marketing directors, and they hired me to revamp their branding. I tapped into the underlying desires and fears weighing on these directors' minds when they consider partnering with an agency, such as impressing "The Powers That Be," landing that coveted corner office, and of course, losing their jobs.

On paper, ClearPivot is an inbound marketing agency. In reality, they're in the biz of creating brighter futures for their clients by turning them into marketing superheroes and boosting their promotion rates.

We love buzzwords because we want to sound like the cool kids in our industry. But when you pepper your messaging with too many of these words, you go from popular to played-out—fast!

repeatable: bake your story into every medium
you use

“Repetition makes reputation.” – Elizabeth Arden

Marketing legend Dan Kennedy illustrates the benefits of relentlessly drilling a story into the minds of your audience. He gave a speech at a conference and stood in front of the attendees. He asked everyone how many of them read the Batman comic books. A handful of hands shot up into the air.

He asked those with their hands up to keep their hands in the air and then asked how many knew the Batman origin story.

Most of the remaining people in the room raised their hands.

So, how is it that most people in the room knew Batman’s backstory if only a handful read the comics?

Repetition, my dear reader. Repetition.

One of the biggest advantages of the internet age is the sea of information available at the click of a mouse.

But being plugged in has its downsides, too. Getting bombarded 24/7 with information from every possible direction means you’ve got to work hard to retain any fact you learn before you’re slammed with another one 30 seconds later. If you’re trying to sear your brand onto your audience’s brains, information overload can seriously crimp your marketing efforts.

But it doesn't have to be that way for you.

One of the most effective ways you can help your audience to remember your brand is by creating patterns.

From a neurological standpoint, our brains seek meaningful patterns. Each new experience prompts the brain to search through its existing network to connect to something it already understands (Patricia Wolfe. *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice, 2nd Edition*. Alexandria: ASCD, 2010. Print).

In other words, instead of basing your brand on a singular idea, you should create a brand that revolves around smaller, related ideas. So, rather than repeating your full story every time, you should reference bite-size chunks of your tale around applicable concepts and mediums.

Remember my earlier example about Batman?

Parts of Batman's origin are told across three mediums: comic books, cartoons, and movies, to illustrate one of the franchise's major themes: Batman is not otherworldly like Superman, nor is he part beast like the Hulk. He's a superhero who's just as mortal and broken as we are.




Sometimes the audience is shown flashbacks of a young, terrified Bruce Wayne cowering at the sight of bats. Sometimes the audience is made privy to another pivotal piece of the caped crusader's saga: the trauma he endured after his parents were gunned down in front of him.

Revealing these clues to the audience allows them to link both his fear of bats and tragic childhood to the underlying reason

why he overcame his demons and fears: so he can spend his time going after Gotham's criminals with mucho gusto.

Both examples revolve around the central concept I previously stated: Bruce Wayne is just as vulnerable and flawed as the rest of us.

Giving your audience a little background about who you are and creating and repeating patterns around your story across different mediums allows them to connect the dots that most company messaging leaves out, such as:

-  Why did you start your company?
-  Does your personal experience influence how you run your business?
-  What challenges have you overcome, and how have those experiences shaped you into the marketer (and person) you are today?

Most importantly, telling and retelling your story helps people remember you, which is crucial when it comes time for them to buy.

The next and final section discusses why you should expose some of your imperfections to bring your ideal audience to you.

relatable: show 'em what's underneath your
apron

"It's warts and all in my songs, and I think that's why people can relate to them." –Adele

Why is understanding Batman's origin story so important?

Because, as Dan Kennedy so eloquently put it, if you didn't understand what led to Bruce Wayne becoming Batman, you'd think he was just "some freak who dresses up like a bat and runs around chasing criminals."

A backstory gives your audience something they can latch onto beyond a logo and a tagline.  [Tweet](#)

Your origin story makes you more genuine in their eyes and minds. It gives them insight into your perspective.

These days terms like "genuine" and "authentic" effortlessly roll off marketers' tongues like beads of sweat off foreheads during a heatwave. But until you connect with your audience on an emotional level, they're just vacuous buzzwords.

Authentic involves sharing personal details about the experiences that shaped you into who you are, showing some of your skin regardless of what others may think or say about you, and unapologetically being yourself when it's easier to blend in.

In my experience, embracing vulnerability is what makes a brand genuine. And that means paying homage to your roots—no matter how lowly you perceive them to be—because:

If you want to be an original, you must proudly own your origin.



Going this route isn't easy, mon ami, but a powerful brand speaks to people at a visceral level, starting with truth-telling.

If you decide to show your readers some flesh and position your scars as strengths that will give them an advantage, you'll be rewarded with an audience that is fiercely bound to you and your brand.

Next, I'm going to discuss in detail why three popular brands decided to "expose" themselves to build robust followings, but before I get into that, let me ask you a question:

why are we obsessed with "losers?"

We love underdogs. The little guys and gals who go up against the mighty with a snowball's chance in hell of winning.

And yet even though everything on paper says they'll fall flat on their faces and fail (epically), we root for them anyway because deep down, we're hoping they'll defy the odds and knock those smug sons-of-bitches at the top clear off their thrones.

Americans, in particular, have a soft spot for the downtrodden. Few stories will wet our eyes and tug at our heartstrings faster than a good ol' fashioned rags-to-riches tale. Hearing about someone who went from a beggar to a millionaire brings a smile to the faces of even the most jaded among us.

Have you ever noticed that some of the most successful entrepreneurs started as underdogs and went through hell and back before they succeeded?

If you think this is a coincidence, let me assure you it's not. I discovered this firsthand when I took the plunge into entrepreneurship.

You can read about my tale at the end of the eBook...

...in the meantime, let's get back to the blinding allure of the underdog.

These folks endure struggle and strife and come out on the other end of battle scarred but unscathed in spirit because of their sheer grit and iron will.

They're stubborn bastards (yes, ladies, that applies to us, too) who don't understand how or why to give up. Rejection means diddly-squat to them because their ambition motivates them to jump over, burrow under, run around or bust straight through any obstacle that dares to stand between them and success.

Triumphant entrepreneurs overcome failure and make it their bitch.  Tweet

But not before said failure punches them in the face and flails them around a few times like a rag doll for good measure.

Do you want to know the difference between entrepreneurs and everyone else? Entrepreneurs don't allow a good pummeling to keep them down or let setbacks define them or bruise their ego. They always pull themselves up and stagger back into the ring for Round 2 (or 20) until they've fulfilled their dreams.

That's why we love the tale of the underdog.

When we hear about someone who relentlessly climbed to the top after enduring non-stop trials and tribulations, it inspires us to jam a cork into our own "whine bottle" and press on.

That's why some of the most successful business owners proudly repeat their story like a scene out of "Groundhog Day" to their audience. Because they want you to connect with them and their values, they need to show you that deep down, they're just like you no matter how big they've gotten.

But enough of my rambling. Here are three entrepreneurial tales of underdogs turned superstars that drive this last point home.

dharmesh shah & brian halligan (hubspot.com): two davids who defied madison avenue's goliaths

Founders Dharmesh Shah and Brian Halligan were just two MIT graduate students looking to make a difference. By all accounts, they had no business going head to head against the marketing giants of Madison Avenue. But Dharmesh and Brian's vision for a more customer-centered online marketing experience meant they could redefine the acceptable rules.

And redefine they did.

They decided to stand up against the machine and focused on creating content that helped prospects instead of only ramming sales messages down their throats.

Using content as a trust builder and marketing tool is far from novel (direct-response copywriters have done this for decades). But Dharmesh and Brian's combined dream of teaching small business owners how to develop client relationships using integrated content management software (CMS) was.

The duo soon learned that people were jazzed about more than just their software.

“When we started HubSpot in a tiny one-room office a block from the MIT campus, we thought we were starting a software company. We were wrong. We had not just started a software company; we had sparked an entire movement.” – Brian Halligan & Dharmesh Shah.

These former small fries have grown up to become big spuds with a lot of influence. But that hasn’t stopped Brian and Dharmesh from regaling their fans with their tale of two little guys who unflinchingly stared down the status quo—and won. They’ve weaved their saga throughout several of their marketing mediums. They’ve embedded it into their annual keynote Inbound speech. They’ve placed it on their website— they even insert their origin into their interviews.

Coincidence? Hardly. A deliberate and effective marketing strategy? Most likely!

It’s their way of reminding their fans, both old and new, that they’ll never forget their humble roots.

aisha tyler (girl on guy.net): the geek shall inherit the earth

Aisha Tyler is tall. Amazonian, to be precise. She hurls far-reaching f-bombs, enjoys post-apocalyptic fiction, is a hardcore gamer, and relishes watching movies rife with explosions. These attributes have scored her a loyal legion of fans and admirers.

But growing up, she couldn't have been more **unpopular**.

During high school, she was regularly teased because of her race (she's black), height (she's been 6'0" since she was 12), and general lack of coordination exacerbated by her lanky adolescent frame. Couple this with the fact that her family wasn't well-off, and she was a bookworm inevitably sealed her fate as least likely to hang out with the cool kids.

However, her awkwardness spurred her eventual comedic prowess.

She used humor as a weapon because it's easier to mock yourself first before your opponent has the chance to. Since she was an outsider on the perimeter of all things hip, she became an adept observer and took scores of mental notes (one of the hallmarks of comedians).

Today, things are turned upside down, and now the "nerds" of the schoolyard are finally enjoying their day in the sun. Sci-Fi and horror culture extraordinaire *ComicCon* is now a household name. A show like *The Big Bang Theory*, with its band of socially inept scientists, is one of the highest-rated sitcoms on television.

If you saw Ms. Tyler today, you'd have a tough time believing she was an outcast. But she never hides or downplays her past. In fact, she flaunts it to her maximum advantage.

Her podcast *Girl on Guy* is a favorite of mine because she showcases the humanity of famous people, a rarity in our celebrity-worshipping society. Her interviews allow her guests to let their hair down and share some of their most intimate, hilarious, and cringe-worthy life stories with her.

And do you know how she empathizes with them?

By recounting her tale of unpopularity, of course (along with her early days of hustling as a young comedian).

Not only does she divulge her battle wounds to her guests, but she parades them as a badge of strength to her audience to constantly remind them that she was, and still is, just like them.

Isn't it funny how many of the quirks her classmates shunned her for are some of the same reasons why she's so popular today?

Irony, she's a barrel of laughs, isn't she?

ash ambirge (the middle finger project.org): from poverty to potty-mouthed prominence

If you've guessed from the URL that the views on this site are as brain-jolting as a mug of Death Wish coffee, then you're spot on. There is nothing lukewarm about this chick, including her opinions, personal philosophy, and words.

Especially her words.

She slings expletives with precision, wrangles her audience with her wit, and is unapologetically outspoken.

And her fans wouldn't have it any other way.

But she also wrestles with insecurities and self-doubt, like the inevitable, “Am I good enough?” and “Am I brave or a complete lunatic for going into business for myself?” questions that permeate the psyche of even the most confident entrepreneurs (yours truly included). And she shares these feelings with her readers when they surface within her.

Ash is an open book on her site and has revealed her poverty-stricken trailer park upbringing in her blog posts.

By all accounts, she should have been a statistic twice over. First, when she and her mother were abandoned by her father (before her birth). She was raised by a single mother whose crushing social anxiety left her unable to hold down a job for very long, forcing Ash to raise herself essentially.

Second, when she had to move in with her new boyfriend on account, she had no place else to go and said boyfriend began physically abusing her, prompting her to flee like a bat out of hell in the middle of the night and to start living out of her car. (She had \$26.00 to her name and also started blogging at this time.)

But she never let her current reality dictate her future.

Instead of buckling under the weight of crippling self-pity, Ash used it to fuel her ambition. After college (which she paid for by landing a full scholarship), she scored a corporate marketing job—which she subsequently quit to start her own copywriting company. That business eventually bombed, forcing her to return to the dreaded corporate arena.

It was then that she decided to start a new company and fuse her corporate know-how with her brazen personality to dish out razor-sharp advice for business owners. She began blogging

religiously and gained clients and considerable influence within her space in less than two years.

Take that, failure!

These three companies couldn't be any more different from one another, which may have you scratching your head now.

There are two reasons why I compared these brands. First, all three possess the six crucial ingredients that I've listed within this recipe because they:


- 1) Are reliable and deliver a similar experience to their audience every time.
- 2) Are honorable and deliver on what they stand for (whether you agree with it or not).
- 3) Have loyal fans that can measure their brand by the number of online followers that show support and solidarity and who turn out in droves to attend their offline events or to buy their products or services.
- 4) Are proud of their quirks and showcase their offbeat personalities through their brands.
- 5) Repeat their story as often as possible (both online and offline) to let their audience know why they operate the way they do.
- 6) Always relate to their audience to show them they are one of them.

Second, I purposefully compared unrelated brands to show you that you can apply these principles to your business regardless of industry. Sadly, many business owners have tunnel vision. A

narrow-minded person would read this eBook and arrive at the following conclusion:

“I run a B2B company, and only one of your examples relates to my industry, so I can’t apply the majority of these lessons to my business,”—to which I have only one reply:

Bollocks.

When it comes to marketing, a lesson is a lesson regardless of the packaging. 

Knowledge abounds, and it’s up to you to keep your mind open and your peepers continuously peeled for inspiration from inside and outside your industry.

The individuals behind these three brands are brazen, embrace a strong point of view, and blaze their trails. And they’re wildly successful as a result.

In case you’re wondering if “wildly successful” can be measured in dollars and cents, feast yer eyes on these digits:

- Despite operating at a \$17.7 million net loss, HubSpot raised \$125 million in its IPO (they went public in September 2014).
- Aisha Tyler has a net worth of \$8 million (celebritynetworth.com).
- Ash Ambirge made her first million before she turned 30.




Not too shabby, eh?

Regardless of whether your industry is B2B, B2C, B2G, or B through Z, every brand on the planet could use an injection from

a personality-filled syringe to assure prospective clients that you are who you are by sharing your story with them.

Unsightly hairy warts and all.

So, how can you make your brand fluent in human and less versed in banal industry speak?

-  Figure out which experiences make you relatable to your audience.
-  Make sure that your story aligns with their values
-  Don't be afraid to reveal some of your unvarnished bits.

And while we're speaking about embarrassing flaws, here's a peek at my own story...

about moi



My name is Taheerah Barney ([@fleshandbrand](#)), and I'm "The Story Brand Amplifier" because I put my clients' origin story front and center and kick up the volume of their brand voice. I started as a young, foolish college grad, armed with nothing but a marketing degree and boundless optimism.

From there, I became a financial consultant-turned holistic health coach-turned copywriter, reuniting me with my original love of marketing.

Throughout my schizophrenic career, I've had a slew of life experiences that ran the emotional gamut from despair to bliss, which molded me into the person and marketer I am today.

Self-employment has been the most exhilarating, frustrating, mind-expanding, humbling, and surreal experience of my life – and I wouldn't change it for anything or anyone.

My story began in 2001. I graduated from Northeastern University, three months to the day before September 11, with a dream of working for an ad agency. My fantasy quickly came apart at the seams.

Following a string of mind-numbing 9-to-5 temp jobs and working as a hostess at night, I eventually caught a break in finance and, a few years later, landed a position at Lehman Brothers (yes, *that* Lehman Brothers). It was a career of contradictions. I loved working in NYC, and I made a good salary, but deep down, I lived with a soul-gnawing secret:

The sound of my alarm clock flooded me with dread every weekday morning.

I wanted to flee the industry as fast as my legs would carry me.

And on September 9, 2008, my miracle arrived as a pink slip.

After getting booted from Corporate America, I didn't just dip my toe into the shallow end of the self-employment pool. I cannonballed into the wild, weird, and wondrous waters of entrepreneurship.

Within the two months of my unemployment, I launched a nutrition consulting business (I'm also a holistic health coach). I learned copywriting to beef up my marketing and sculpt some persuasion muscle.

By day I focused on growing my practice, but I spent night after bleary-eyed night hunched over every copywriting book and course I could get my hands on, which also fueled my obsession with self-education.

I've been over the moon ever since.

Two years into my practice, I began booking writing clients on the side. I developed a full-blown addiction to copywriting, slowly transitioned into writing full-time, and eventually hung up my holistic hat for good.

Entrepreneurship has pushed me so far beyond my limits that I could never locate my original comfort zone again – even if I had a search party – and I am deeply grateful.

I'm privileged enough to make a living indulging three of my biggest passions: marketing, copywriting, and branding.

And it doesn't get much better than that.

WOO-HOO!

You made it to the end. You either enjoyed what you read or furiously scrolled to the bottom in disgust because you felt this eBook was too long.

Either way, you're finished, baby!

A big THANK YOU for investing your time in me & enduring my rants. I hope you walked away with more than just computer-fried eyes.

If you were moved by what you read, shoot me an email (hello@fleshandbrand.com) with your thoughts, praise, (constructive) criticisms, or suggestions, if you have any.

(Or you could say, "hey." That works, too.)

But before you fire off that puppy, make sure it's as brief and to-the-point as possible. Because if I want to read a novel, I'll browse the Kindle store. 😊

You can also hit me up on [Linkedin](#).

That's a wrap, folks! Until next time.