



7 Secrets to a ~~killer~~ sustainable brand

Presented by
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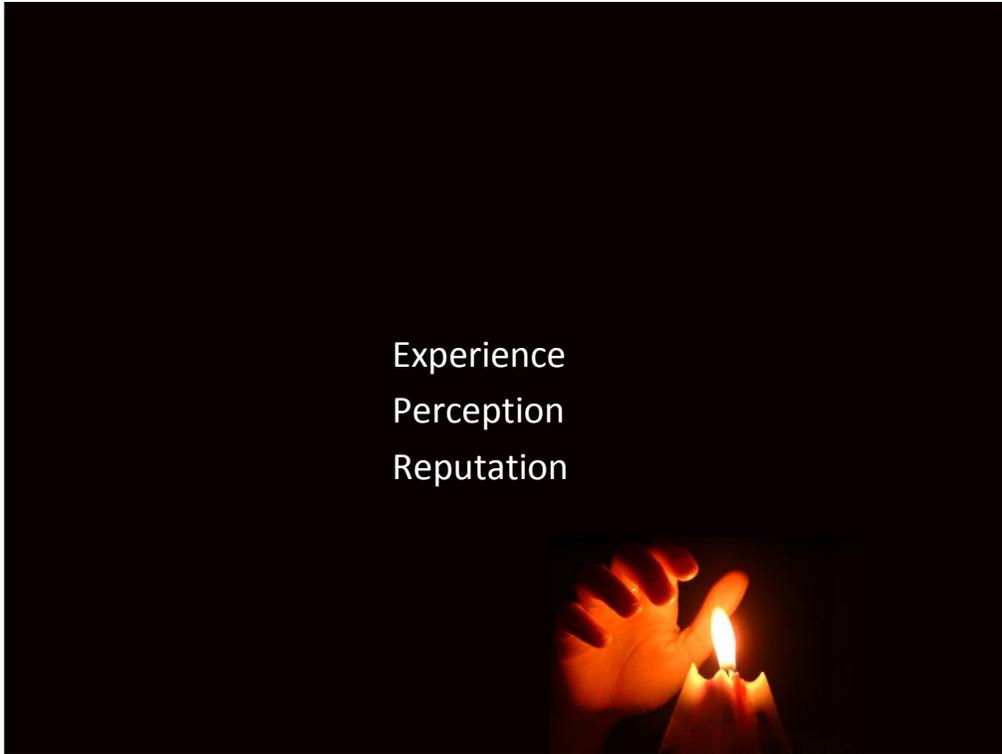
← **Yours truly**

Hello everyone. I'm Sharon Habib from Outsidein Communications. We help organizations engage with the people most important to them through their brand and everything they say and do. Our work is grounded in the fact that the brand underpins communications.

I've been doing brand communications for many years, starting in South Africa where I branded and communicated a variety of pension funds like Mercedes Benz and Volkswagon. I've lived in Canada for more than 18 years and have helped define and communicate brands such as the BC Cancer Agency, Museum of Anthropology at UBC, the UBC employer brand, we've branded the profession of Opticianry and have been working with the four western Canadian Colleges and Associations of Registered Nurses where we've been doing a very deep exercise of branding from the inside out. We focus on how brands are communicated and experienced both inside an organization, and out and today I'm lucky to have this opportunity to share with you what we've come to as the 7 secrets for a sustainable brand. We called it a killer brand because these secrets are vital to brand success.



Let's first get onto the same page on what a brand is.



Toronto-based advertising guru Terry O Reilly says: "A brand is the short cut we store in our brain for quick recognition and retrieval "

That brand recognition is invariably based on the experience of a product or service. What you are like to interact with is how people will view your brand.

How people anticipate dealing with you also speaks to your brand – whether that's their perception of what they've heard about you through your reputation.

In short – it's what we want to be known for.

- Driven from the inside
- Reflected through every touch point, always
- Everyone is accountable for it
- Strategic asset



These four points are themes throughout this presentation and sum up Outsidein's philosophy on brand.

Your brand originates on the inside. Brands are driven by what the people within your organization do and say. So every interaction your clients have with you through any touch point, communicates your brand. That touch point could be their experience on your website, in person, by phone, an email, the quality of your product, you name it.

This means that the brand is not only marketing's schtick – everyone in your organization has brand accountability.

When organizations really and truly know what their brand is, and recognize that it's the glue that holds everything together coherently, it's a powerful strategic asset.

Brands are not woo-woo fuzzy things. Brands are real and they matter a great deal. For communicators brands inform the tone and message and we play a vital role in influencing brand perceptions.

Secret #1: Know who you truly are and define it in words



Secret #1 is the one and only starting point for a successful brand. You need to have a deep understanding who you truly are as an organization, and you need to define it in words. When your brand is defined in words it gives the organization a tool that creates a shared understanding and of, and common language for your brand.

All organizations have brand aspirations. Whatever your aspirations are, your brand will need to be authentic and that means knowing from who you are, at your essence.

We've heard many a client say: "We know who we are" but they can't really put it into words, so they can't make their brand work for them as effectively because they don't have a clear picture of what it is.

Knowing what your brand is, in words, puts a powerful tool in your hands.



The trouble with brands start when this foundation is missing or inadequate.

Symptoms that a brand is not clearly defined include:

Our brand is not well known enough. Staff don't know what our brand is.
We have a hard time explaining what we're about
It's being used inconsistently
Customers or members just don't understand us

Sound familiar? In 100 percent of the cases where we've heard these statements the problem boils down to the same issue....the brand is not grounded on an adequate foundation of a deep and shared understanding of who you are.

So let's talk about that foundation then.

Ground the brand research

- Understand who you really are
 - Do the research
 - Hear from the right people
- Be clear where you want to go
- Define your brand in words



So how do you get to this deep understanding of who you are. You have to do the research. And you have to hear from people right across the organization, as well as your external audiences.

As I mentioned, organizations generally have future plans for what they want to become. And that has to be closely examined in this phase of research so that as you evolve, you remain authentic.

Once you have this clarity, you can put it into words. When Outsidein was starting out 7 years ago, we had to get outside help to help us define our brand which seems crazy because we do this all the time. The problem is, when you're on the inside of the bottle you can't read the label. So trying to do this for yourself is really challenging. We know. We tried.

Communications plays a vital role in the brand – not only in terms of building and maintaining its integrity through the spoken and written word externally, but also ensuring that the brand definition, its promise and expectations are understood and communicated internally.

Let's see who has done a good job of this.

WESTJET



Westjet has a clearly defined brand and it's not hard to figure out what their brand definition is: Care....they care about the customer experience and recognize that it goes beyond just efficient flight service and a safe ride, afterall one aircraft is like another. They get that their people will make the difference to the passenger's experience.

They get that brands are driven from the inside, so they care about their staff because they appreciate that it is *the staff* who deliver their brand. It's clear that staff are empowered to live the brand. They actually hire staff that fit the brand so it's not hard to deliver authenticity time and time again. None of this would be possible without a very closely defined and understood brand. Westjet truly knows who they are and who they want to be.

Secret #2: It must be authentic



These secrets to a successful brand are interlinked and I've already mentioned that knowing who you are is key to maintaining authenticity through every touch point.

- Be who you are
- Do what you say
- Deliver what you promise
- Do it consistently



The bottom line is
Be who you are
Do what you say
Deliver what you promise
Do it consistently

Secret #3: The logo is servant, not king



Secret # 3. The logo is servant, not king. Branding that is primarily driven by a new and shiny logo is doomed in the long term. This is not to say that the logo is unimportant. It definitely has a place. But....

Brand is not a logo

Experience
Perception
Reputation



The brand is not a logo. It's the experience, perception and reputation. So what's the role of the logo?

The logo is....

- Visual identifier
- Verbal brand expressed visually
- Picture that's worth 1000 words

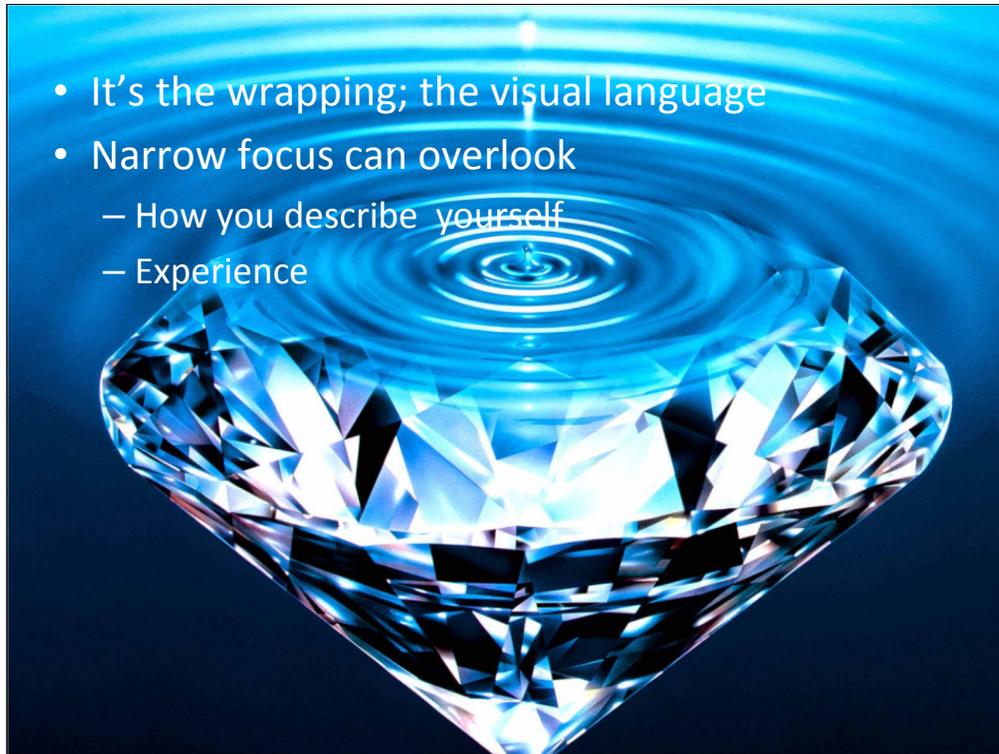


Brands are expressed in three ways: verbally, experientially and visually.

A logo is part of the visual language that expresses your brand. It's the at-a-glance identifier that people come to associate with your organization.

A good logo that is based on a solidly defined brand is that picture that speaks a 1000 words.

The purpose of Nobody's Children Foundation is to help orphans – those most vulnerable children. Can you see how the logo expresses that vulnerability? But also friendship and finding support?



So we need to bear in mind the context of the logo's role: It's part of the wrapping. It's an important part of the visual brand language. Organizations that focus their brand efforts on the logo run the risk of short changing the other two ways that brands are expressed – verbally and experientially.



always remember the experience

the customer will



By way of a good example is our client, the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, or CARNA. We have been working with them on an extensive branding initiative that does not even touch the logo. That remains as it is – at least for now. Their efforts, quite admirably, are focused on branding from the inside. Working on the stuff that most matters. Their whole aim in branding is to positively affect the experience of their target audience – registered nurses in Alberta.

We started with the necessary research to uncover their authentic brand essence, we took into account their brand aspirations are, and then we defined their brand in words and created a roadmap, or strategy, to help them grow towards their aspirational brand from a place of authenticity. This has been a very powerful exercise for them to the extent they are courageously making a dramatic shift that allows for a brand-led culture change. I'll share with you a little more later on about what they're doing



Secret #4 is, in order to build momentum for your brand, you need a plan. I mentioned that CARNA is following a strategic roadmap that is really taking them along the path to where they want to be. For any brand to achieve it's goals, it needs a plan or strategy

- Strategy to guide
 - Business goal support
 - All areas of business
 - Verbal language uptake
 - Visual brand consistency
 - Experiential consistency
 - All touch points
- Leadership commitment
 - Budget
 - Resources



We've said that the brand is expressed through everything you say and do. So it's essential that there is a strategy that keeps it focused and consistent. That strategy must ensure the brand supports...

Business goals

All areas of business, cutting across silos

The uptake of the brand and how it is expressed

Visual brand consistency

Experiential consistency through every touchpoint

Leadership needs to appreciate its value and be committed to providing the resources to manage and grow the brand.



This is just a visual snapshot of some of the touchpoints that the brand strategy needs to address. There are more and a lot depends on what your organizations touch points are, and what your priorities are.

Secret #5: Get staff involved
and on board



If brands are driven from the inside out then it's gotta be staff who are the ones doing it. Whether they are building products or directly, or indirectly contributing to the customer experience, they are impacting the brand.

Only 41 percent of employees said they know what their company stands for and what makes its brand different from competitors' brands.

Gallup Workplace Study, 2012/13

Only 41 percent of employees said they know what their company stands for and what makes its brand different from competitors' brands. This means most organizations are not getting the maximum return from their brands that they could be getting.



An organization has only one brand. The internal experience of the brand should be very similar to the external experience of it. In recent years there's been a lot of buzz about the employer brand but really, organizations have just one brand but multiple audiences, and what has been routinely overlooked until recently, is that employees are a primary audience of any brand. This should be the focus of an employer brand – an attractive employer brand should help you retain and also attract other star employees.

For staff to deliver the brand consistently, they have to experience it too.



It's important to get staff involved and onboard is because they are among your best brand ambassadors. Think WestJet. Their staff is clearly passionate about the brand and passengers feel it.

You need to inspire and immerse staff in the brand with training and education.

Equip them to support the brand with brand training, useful guidelines, a messaging platform and tools that equip them to do what they need to do rather than invent their own stuff like templates and so on.

- Staff education
- Guidelines
- Brand writing workshops
- Reworking all their written materials
- Brand experience and communications audit
- Brand-led website rebuild

The results are dramatic



Kudos

So let's go back to CARNA to see how they have immersed and equipped staff to live the brand.

Secret #6: Be a brand control freak



- Brands need to be managed
- Brand manager needs clout, presence at strategic table
- Documented guidelines
- Training and support tools
- Regular audits



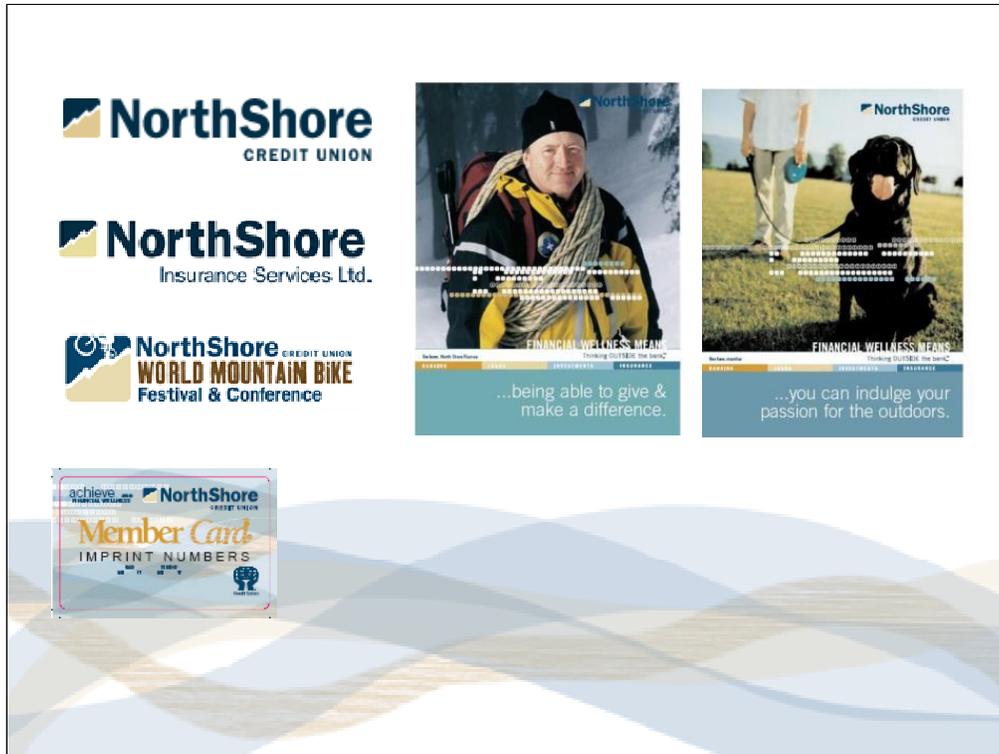
The brand needs to be managed. Traditionally they're managed in marketing or communications.

Because the brand is a strategic asset that glues the organization together cohesively, the brand manager needs clout and needs to be at the strategic table.

Documented guidelines

Training and support tools

Regular audits



I was the brand manager at North Shore Credit Union some years ago. They recently rebranded as Blueshore so they won't look like this anymore.

The brand was defined as financial wellness that enabled a west coast wellness lifestyle. It was closely managed so the brand was pervasive. When I left we had started to align the internal experience of the brand with the external experience. For example, we stopped serving staff donuts and pop at meetings and served them bran muffins and juice, in the spirit of wellness. Corporate swag was reflective of the west coast lifestyle with branded outdoors widgets. The visual brand was very well defined. We had a wellness story that underpinned our photography style.

There were sub brands so there was a sub brand strategy to ensure that brand equity accrued to the master brand.

You likely know the golden rule of the visual brand management – don't mess with the logo. Well, we had 95% brand recognition in our demographic area so we could! We were the title sponsors of a brand aligned event and we were able to brand it with our logo...

Secret #7: Prevent runaway sub brands



And on the topic of sub brands, that brings me to the final secret. Sub-brands have to be very carefully thought about. This is a cautionary tale. Secret number 7 is to prevent the leaking of brand equity from the master brand by controlling runaway sub brands



Without strong controls for a brand, it's very easy for departments and employees to say: Let's brand this program, that service, this communique, that program.

The reality is, sub brands are seldom warranted. Seldom.

If a sub brand is to exist, it should have strategic merit and for the most part should live in relation to the master brand in such a way that accrues equity to both itself and the master brand.



Let's look at a client of ours, AMSSA. That's their old logo at the top. The rest were their sub-brands. Sub branding was a runaway train. The danger with sub brands is they

After doing some research we found that only one of these sub brands really warranted being its own brand, and that was the Safe Harbour program. There on the right. Now this brand had been around a long time and it eclipsed AMSSA's brand. By that I mean, Safe Harbour was better known than AMSSA. Our task was to define AMSSA's brand and help them build brand recognition so....



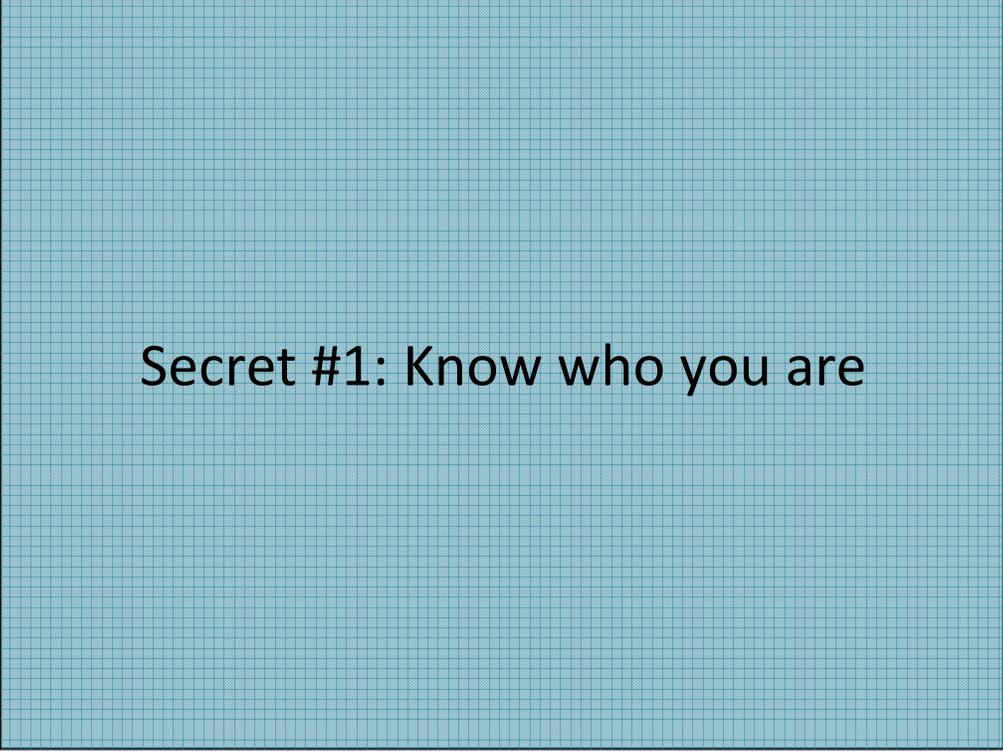
We advised them to absorb all the sub brands except Safe Harbour because it was so well known. And because a good sub brand strategy will always recommend that the brands look like first cousins, their designer retroactively created the new master brand from the established look of the sub-brand. So on the left is the new brand that firmly represents the verbally defined brand.



7 Secrets in action

OK, let's look at a brand that applies all seven secrets.

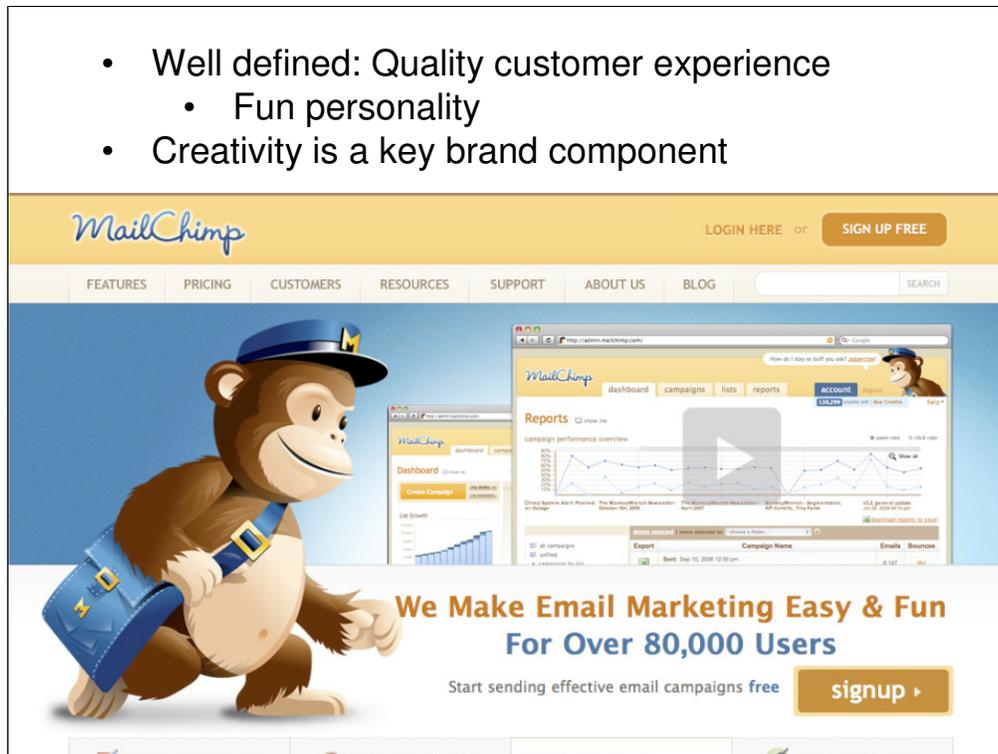
MailChimp. You've probably heard of it and likely many of you use it since more than 4 million people use MailChimp to create, send, and track email newsletters.



Secret #1: Know who you are

Know who you are, who you want to be and define it in words.

- Well defined: Quality customer experience
 - Fun personality
- Creativity is a key brand component



This company knows who it is – down to its personality, and what they want to achieve – quality customer experience. They are insanely committed to delivering a quality customer experience. Part of that experience is they provide tools that enable their customers to deliver more creative and more effective emails. So they see creativity is a key attribute of their brand, and key to cultivating within their company. They see it's what keeps their ideas fresh and unique.

Creativity is a tangible part of their culture and it's pervasive, from the top down, through and through.

The company's fun mascot reflects their personality. The Chimp's name is Fred or Freddie, short for Frederick Von Chimpenheimer IV

The name Mailchimp came about as a joke. MailChimp's founder, Ben Chestnut says they came up with it because they told customers, "You've got a business to run; don't code stuff that you could hire a monkey to do."

Secret #2: The logo is servant, not king



They are an interesting mix: They absolutely do not take themselves seriously yet they are deadly serious about what their mission. One clear indicator that they don't take themselves seriously, look at all the ways they play with their logo.

Secret #3: Brand momentum
needs a plan

Evidence of a strategy

- Freemium model
 - Significant brand building strategy
 - Logo in the footer of free users' emails
 - About 3,000 new signups everyday
- Hiring the right people
- Attention to all experiences
 - Customer support
 - Product experience
 - Merch



They decided to go with a Freemium model. This means allowing users to use certain features of your product for free, and if they like it, pay to access more features. But in exchange for giving you really useful access to the product, it's commonplace for the vendor – in this case MailChimp – to feature their logo at the bottom of any of your emails or newsletters that you generate with their product. This is fair and ethical. And what a way to communicate their brand and build momentum.

Clearly this works for them because since their freemium inception they've averaged about 3000 new user signups a day. That's a massive growth in brand building not to mention potential revenue stream for conversion to paying clients.

They have aggressive growth plans but have not lost sight of the need to hire the right kind of people. People who will further the brand.

The other thing we notice that speaks to them having a plan that keeps them consistent, is the clearly pay attention to all customer touch points.

“The quality of our merch is a direct reflection on MailChimp and the people who worked together to create it.”



Merchandize, or merch as they call it, is a key touch point with customers. They have this kind of cult following and their online T-shirt giveaways trigger virtual stampedes.

Note they quality test that their mascot monkeys have the right amount of stuffing



Their staff comes up with crazy ideas and they have the freedom to pursue them. They actually make knit caps for cats!



Monkey hats turn MailChimp customers into hug-fueled brand ambassadors.

Secret #4: It must be authentic

They speak it, live it

“MailChimp is self-funded, profitable, and slowly taking over the world. Our founder-run team of 200 introverts, extroverts, right brains, and left brains works hard to make products

pe

e.”



They're so consistent. Being able to sustain consistency the way they do is evidence of managed authenticity because you're just being who you are. They hire the right people so that the brand is perpetuated naturally.

Here's what they say in their about us. You can even feel their brand in their tone.

Secret #5: Get staff involved and on board

Starts on the inside...always

“We host writers, designers, comedians, professional pool players, and other guests for MailChimp's weekly Coffee Hour, so our staff can get inspired by people in different industries.”

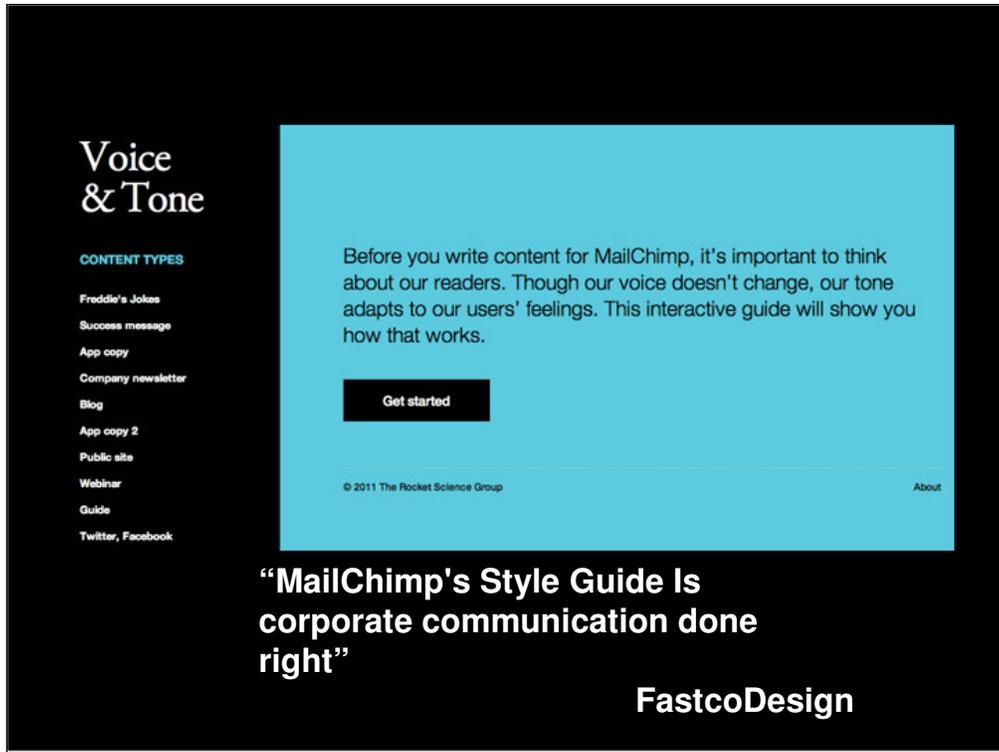


The employees get to experience that brand too because they fully grasp that brands are driven from the inside out. They actively encourage employees to find new ways to delight customers and evolve the company.

Staff are well supported to represent the brand

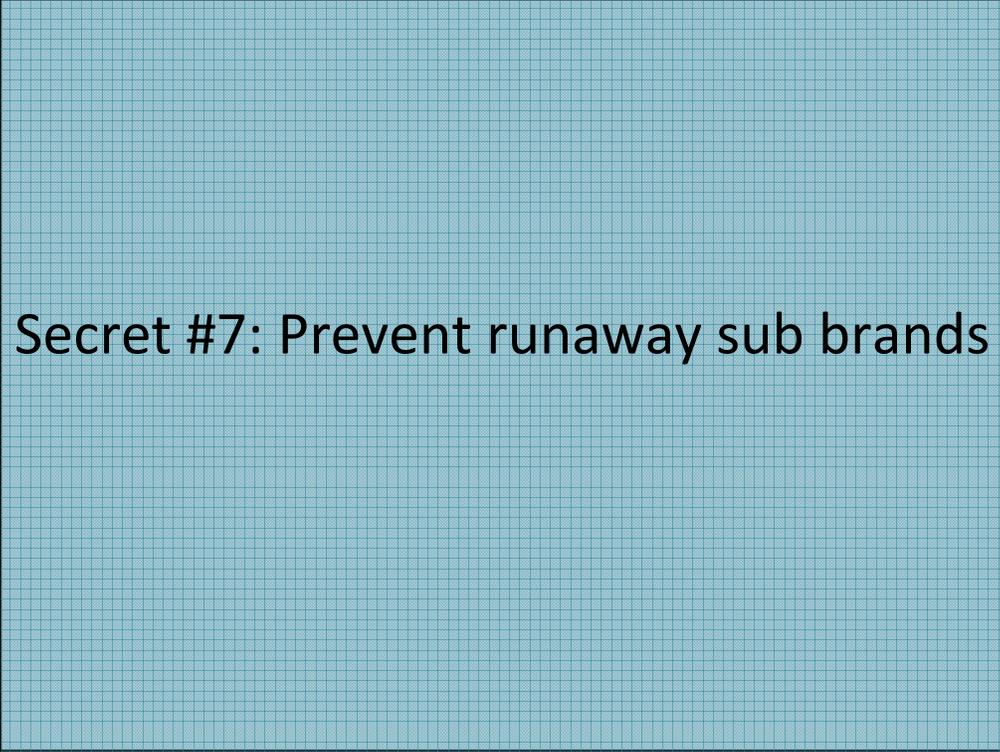
They're fun inside and out. MailChimp employees brag about office pranks on the website. Any other organization would cringe but it's part of who they are and how they are.

Secret #6: Be a brand control freak



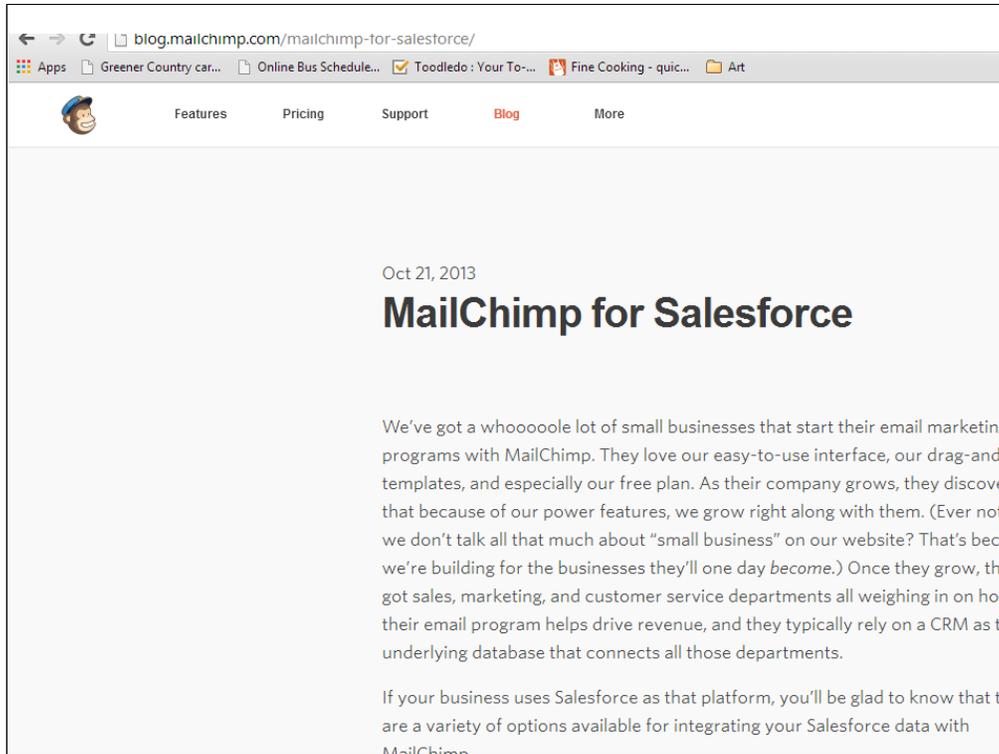
Staff is well supported to deliver the brand

Everyone at MailChimp knows what their brand is about. Their brand style guide is an interactive online guide that is both extremely useful as well as a brand education tool, helping employees think on brand



Secret #7: Prevent runaway sub brands

We looked for evidence of sub brands, and they sure have opportunity....



But they don't appear to have sub brands. To me this speaks to a clearly defined brand strategy that has recognized that sub brands will not serve the master brand in this case (don't get me wrong – sub brands have a place). It would be so tempting to create a sub brand for Salesforce but they have not. What you see here is simply a blog heading, no version of Mailchimp for Salesforce.

And just notice that tone in the first phrase of the body content!



That's the end my talking. I'd love to hear from you. Are there any questions or comments?





Connect with me!



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Hello everyone. I'm Sharon Habib from Outsidein Communications where our mantra is: We help you engage with the people most important to you through your brand and everything you say and do.

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