

A close-up photograph of a person wearing medieval-style armor. The armor consists of a chainmail tunic with large, overlapping metal plates on the shoulders and chest. A thick, white fur cape is draped over the shoulders. The person's arms are visible, wearing dark gloves and a black wristband. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

SHOWRUNNER BRANDING

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KANTAR SIFO

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When it comes to communication and leadership one of the biggest challenges is how to create a cohesive brand that not only is evident within the organisation internally, but also evident in external communication aimed at customers, the job market and to investors, and as a brand will remain convincing over time.

It is not uncommon for a company's communication to be spread in different directions, with the market speaking one language, HR another and the company itself a third language internally. It's almost as if there are several different companies within the same company, and therefore experienced differently, depending on when you have approached the company, and on the context in which you do so – as a customer, a potential employee or an investor.

Furthermore, it is not entirely unheard of for new creative styles of advertising and new positioning to be unleashed without uniting with the company's basic values and internal culture. Which leads to the fact that the company's image sprawls, varies and becomes unclear as the years go by.

Costly and difficult to navigate

This creates issues that will be costly at several levels. Firstly, it becomes more difficult to attract and recruit the right staff and to retain talent because these individuals have the wrong image of the company from the very beginning. Secondly, it gets more challenging to keep promises made to the market because the customers have different expectations. Thirdly, it gets more difficult to lead the organisation towards achieving the company's targets and visions because its employees are not certain what the company's hallmark is.



As such, the challenge for the company's leaders is to create a brand that unifies all of these linking elements and that leaves the same impression in all matters of contact with the company, regardless of how, where and when you approached the organisation. The company needs to be able to create its own personality – and leave an impression unique to the company in all its communication.

Learn from the showrunners on successful TV series

In most cases, the underlying problem is that there is

no clear, jointly shared vision of the company's personality and internal culture

and of how the different elements should be evident for the company's communication, external appearance, products/services and deliveries so that any encounter with the brand feels authentic and consistent.

Many mature companies on the market have formalised their values, but often these end up as values on paper,

which although is good to have (in documents) but these do not manifest themselves in the everyday deeds of managers and staff. In other cases, the values are far too generic and could be applied to any organisation. Other underlying problems may be organisational in nature i.e. when it is unclear who is responsible for coordinating the brand so that it is perceived in the same way at all of the company's interfaces (MD, Head of Communications, Head of HR, the management team or the entire organisation).

Companies can learn something from Game of Thrones, Mad Men, Orange is the new Black and other successful TV series in this area.

These series have a **showrunner**, who is responsible for ensuring that each programme always has the same 'feel' and 'pitch' across the series regardless of whether you are watching season 1 or season 5, and who must ensure these do not change even if the characters and plots are developed as the series progresses, and if new directors and actors join the show.

The showrunner is often responsible both for the creative side of production and for maintaining the business partnership with the TV company that commissioned the series. She or he has complete authority when it comes to the 'feel' of the TV series and may intervene and change the script and direction if it is not in line with the

programme's concept or leaving the right impression on the viewer when they experience the series.

The showrunner's main task is, quite simply, to get all of the production team to share the same vision for the TV series' development and to get everyone involved to 'sing to the same hymn sheet' to create

a coherent narrative over time, and one in which the TV series' unique look and feel is never lost.

Charismatic business leaders as showrunners

Examples of organisations that have been more successful than others at creating distinct and coherent brands, and also had iconic leaders among their founding members, are for example Steve Jobs (Apple), Ingvar Kamprad (IKEA) and Richard Branson (Virgin).

With their strong personalities, visions that win you over and eye for details, they have played a role as showrunners for their own companies over time. And in the long run they have created multinational businesses with distinct personalities and a special 'feel', the majority of which comes from their founders' characters.



Helping all employees to become showrunners

These companies have a special kind of integrity – “This is what we do; this is our way of doing things” – as well as a thread running through everything, from the responsibilities of the individual to the corporate vision. You know who you are, what you want as a company, and have the courage to act on this in all contexts. It means that every single employee ends up being a showrunner for the company’s brand, and can leave the right impression on all of the company’s interfaces.

The internal leadership and internal culture in these companies is in harmony with the external communication – regardless of whether the communication is directly towards the market, via customer services or to potential employees. Legibility in expression and personality creates a brand and a company.

How do organisations without ‘strong’ founding members create their own personality?

Leaders of mature companies who lack this type of charismatic founding members can still build strong companies with a unique ‘feel’. Essentially it’s all about having the courage to decide what type of personality that is most reflective of the company’s internal culture and to use this as a starting point when creating cohesive communication and deliveries that distinguishes the company from other companies and creates a unified brand.

Kantar Sifo has a model for this process, which can be used for companies of different sizes. Below you will find five words of advice to help companies create their own personality and to build a brand with a cohesive communication across all contexts.

Five steps to establish Showrunner Branding



1 Answer the question “WHO is the company as a person and what is the company’s underlying personality?”

Are you a thoughtful expert in your field or more a bundle of energy that always tries to find new solutions? Or do you always want to be the best at everything and win every time, or do you take a back seat approach, driven instead by your curiosity and desires?



2 Based on WHO you are, determine which customers and which needs you should focus on.

Everyone can’t love you, nor can anyone be perceived as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to all problems.



3 In a similar fashion, decide which types of candidates you would like to attract.

Don’t think about age or sex, but rather about what motivates the employees in their work. Do people work for you so they can change the world, achieve success, become experts in their fields, to be part of the winning team, or just to have a good time? Your clarity will be rewarded.



4 Allow your company’s personality to shine everywhere, the whole time. WHO you are.

Across all channels, with the same ‘pitch’ and the same ‘feel’. You should, however, adapt the message for your target group and the occasion. Create uniqueness through the way you talk and the way you deliver. WHAT you deliver is likely to be quite similar to what your competitors deliver. Outshine your competitors.



5 Be clear about the features that are specific to your company, have the courage to set yourself apart

Your distinctness will make you stand out and attract whom you want. Create a hallmark that is unmistakable.

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