

COLUMNS

Heritage brand architecture: Using passion for authenticity to create emerging brands

September 26, 2014



Rebecca Miller speaking at Luxury FirstLook: Strategy 2014

By **Rebecca Miller**

Sign up now

Luxury Daily

"The world is in perpetual motion, and we must invent the things of tomorrow. One must go before others, be determined and exacting, and let your intelligence direct your life. Act with audacity." – Madame Clicquot

Exposure is a psychological process allowing people an inclination to develop a preference for product and experiences simply because they are familiar with them. This familiarity establishes a level of comfort and trust, and breeds enjoyment.

Brands invest years and significant monies earning this trust and respect from their clients. And so, this exact interchange must now reach those who people who have yet to make the brand's acquaintance.

Sub way

Brand relationships are diverse, multifaceted, and dynamic. The establishment of long-term relationships is enhanced when values intersect. The same should be true of corporate brands and sub-brands. This ensures that the core elements remain authentic,

confirming credibility in the eyes of the consumers. These brands need to simultaneously be decidedly different, yet very familiar.

Sub-brands, or secondary brands, need to relate and support the original brand. Not to do so creates confusion and mistrust. This group of emerging brands is a singular opportunity to allow others to paint on the canvas of an existing brand.

The building of a brand requires a creative range of motion in the beginning. The opposite is true as it matures.

Everything must be consistent on strategy; every point of contact, product, public relations, marketing, sales, customer experience, support, store display, Web site - all must deliver a seamless message and experience, flawlessly executed.

Building a sub-brand has many of the same attributes as the genesis of the original brand, with one significant difference. It includes honoring the original DNA.

Sub-brands and line extensions require a natural progression, one that is authentic, allowing clients to easily follow and be engaged in its authenticity. This requires integrity, respect, logic, discipline and depth.

Straying too far from the core of the brand by spatter painting or dabbling will only serve to confuse your clients. Get in and own a category or stay out.

We need to respect the value of what we do, maintaining the integrity to question, evolve and do it with passion and an eye to the future. In essence, honoring the heritage, history and craft, but doing it more intelligently, thoughtfully and with an inclusive eye to the needs of the next generation.

To accomplish this, you have to have a certain balance, paying respect to the creative origin: the backbone, the savoir-faire, and the craftsmanship that is shared.

Canvassing

Emerging brands, must, at their core, transfer the heritage, value and essence of their originating entity. But as we paint on that canvas, we must be brave enough to imagine that we will bring new skills and techniques, a new vision, and perhaps a layered quality as new skills bring us into the future.

Craftsmanship is the foundation upon which much of luxury relies – that of centuries old labor-intensive techniques. As we bring brands forward, there is an exquisite balance between emerging technology and heritage craftsmanship.

Brands, even as they evolve, must evoke their history and hand, those qualities so inherently imbedded in their brand persona and product.

Luxury is, by nature, a traditional or moderate portent, and maybe that is one reason people value it.

These emerging brands are typically designed to engage new clients. The relationship between the heritage brand and its evolutionary product line should have an integrated

value, a relatedness, that enhances their value in tandem, and therefore creates authentic value to the consumer which translates to profit.

Critical is the translation of qualities on which the brand has created heritage recognition and those that clients recognize and depend upon in a sub-brand.

One must act passionately so as not to compromise the integrity that transfers between the existing and emerging brands.

Heritage brands that have shown the courage to let others paint on the canvas of their brand have been able to capitalize on their decision by remaining relevant to clients and prospects alike.

Eye on design

Many heritage brands are lost to us. Those who have chosen to continue to conduct business using old practices have suffered dearly and have placed their brand at risk.

Controlling the design process while not listening, understanding or responding to what your client values puts the brands in jeopardy.

Do not design in a vacuum. Ask and listen to your customers. They will give you valuable insight as to product direction.

Shortsightedness has placed brands at risk, forcing them to merge, sell or close.

Consider a multi-generation luxury brand that has focused on a single product and has coasted on its well-earned reputation, but has suffered market share loss due to its client base shrinking and no longer buying, designing in a vacuum, offering non-relevant designs that do not appeal to younger clients or the trade, leaving itself vulnerable to other brands encroaching upon and securing its market space.

A brand that has no current understanding of the significant groups it once served has lost focus in an effort to expand and recapture market share by dabbling in various line extensions, failing to do so in a thoughtful progression and without depth placing itself in a down position.

This scenario is almost impossible to fix, as the years have been unkind to the brand in payment for the brand basically ignoring the market trends and what clients value.

Creating a sub-brand that celebrates what placed the brand in the venerable position originally allows the market and consumer to be acknowledged, creating the opportunity for renewal of the existing company brand while capturing a new clientele through a well-designed and executed plan has proven to be a solid solution.

LUXURY HERITAGE BRANDS need to be part of the conversation. As Sydney J. Harris, an accomplished journalist, aptly said, "Information is giving out; communication is getting through." The sub-brand must hit this mark.

Heritage brands understand affluent consumers are essential to their future. Be inclusive and passionate about them. They are concerned about quality, the artisan and the

preservation of each. They expect and desire exceptional quality products that represent the best in each category.

Brands must understand and respond to what this group values and not depart from this valuable gift of knowledge.

Rebecca Miller is principal at Miller & Company, New York. Reach her at rebecca@ramillerandco.com.

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.