

Building better brands

The 5MetaCom approach to branding

Part I: Branding Philosophy & Branding Process



Your brand is not just a logo, not just a name; it's an idea that exists in the minds of your audience. Building better brands involves a process of finding, developing and nurturing this idea—then replicating and delivering it so your audience gets a clear, favorable impression every time.

How do you create a great brand? There are nearly as many theories as there are marketing advisors. At 5MetaCom, we help our clients develop enduring brands based on an integrated process that is rooted in a simple-yet-powerful philosophy of branding. Integration is the key; skip a step or choose to ignore a philosophical component, and your brand will not be as strong as it can be. Understand the philosophy, follow the process and it works.

Our Branding Philosophy: three key components

At 5MetaCom, we believe that branding is the interaction of three key components: *positioning*, *frequency* and *consistency*.

Positioning. In the most basic terms, positioning communicates *what you do* and *who you're for*. We believe your brand position should be narrow. Although you might want to be all things to all people, most successful brands, particularly within the realm of technical and scientific products, reach a narrower target.

Frequency. One of the most important—and misunderstood—components of branding is frequency. You must tell your audience what you do and who you're for, again and again—and again. Why? Because people forget. Research shows that 95 percent of new information learned is forgotten in 30 days or less. So without frequency, people will forget about you.

Consistency. Your brand message must be recognizably consistent with the last brand message you sent, in terms of image, personality, tone, position and message—across all media. A communication from you should always look as if it comes from you. Consistency is the glue that bonds your brand position and frequency to help you deliver clear and memorable brand messages.

Three *near fatal* branding mistakes

- 1. Choosing to brand later rather than now.** Remember, brands exist in the minds of the audience. You will be “branded” whether you do anything or not — by employees, customers, shareholders, etc.
- 2. Failing to realize the importance of brand structure.** Brands developed without a solid foundation cost more to penetrate the market, take more time to manage and live shorter, less durable lives than strong brands.
- 3. Thinking tactics first.** In an attempt to gain quick market presence, tactics such as brochures, advertisements, web sites, and sales tools get produced and delivered to the marketplace before, or in place of, giving much thought to creating a compelling position, identity and message for the brand.

The smart way to spend your branding dollars

How do you create a winning brand efficiently? Effective resource allocation is an important first step—where you spend your marketing dollars, how much you spend, and, more importantly... WHY. 5MetaCom’s branding philosophy and branding process can help you deploy your resources efficiently and effectively.

5MetaCom has created a proprietary resource allocation model we call the “marketing wedge.” To find out more about this branding tool, please ask us for a copy of *The 5MetaCom approach to branding Part II*.

The Branding Process: five steps to better brands

At 5MetaCom, we’ve developed a process for branding technical and scientific products. By performing the following five steps, we’re confident your brand has a better chance to be long-lasting and successful.

Step 1: Brand Discovery

Branding begins with discovery: an assessment of where you’ve been, where you are now, and where you want to be. The gap between your current reality and your desired state is the area in which your brand strategy must ultimately work. The discovery phase results in an *understanding* that will drive the development of your brand.

Discovery involves asking questions, both inside and outside your organization, about your company, your products, your industry, your competitors and your customers. The goal: to clearly identify issues, trends, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within your company and the marketplace for what you have to sell.

Step 2: Brand Envisioning

Envisioning gives strength and durability to the brand by developing your *brand’s structure*—to conceptualize the brand as it will exist in the audience’s mind. Brand Structure components include:

- **Strategy:** establishing how and where your brand will compete.
- **Value:** identifying qualities of your brand you believe customers and prospects will find attractive and beneficial.
- **Promise:** articulating what you want your target audience to believe is your reason for being—how they would describe your brand to others.
- **Personality:** describing, in human terms, the traits and behavior of your brand (e.g., honest, dependable, thrifty, etc.).
- **Organization:** charting the relationship between multiple elements, divisions and products that fall within, or near, the scope of the brand. For example, how the product brand works in relation to the company brand.

The components above define your *Brand Nucleus*: the central force of your brand around which everything else revolves, including the remaining three steps. This step also includes tactical planning for use in Step 4.

Step 3: Brand Expression

During the expression phase, your brand develops a name and a face—perhaps literally. It’s the expression of your brand’s personality and essence in creative terms. Names, logos, and graphic style (colors, typography) will be created. A copy platform will be developed to guide the brand message, copy tone and key copy points. A brand line may be necessary to accompany the name and logo to help sum up your brand promise; think “Nothing runs like a Deere,” or Panasonic’s “Just slightly ahead of our time.” We’ll also flesh out the brand’s voice and imagery: the public presentation of the brand personality.

Step 4: Brand Mobilization

You can think of mobilization as the step that binds together 5MetaCom’s three philosophical components of branding: positioning, frequency and consistency. Mobilization provides the delivery of your brand to the target audience through evaluation, selection and creation of a system of tools and tactics for use in sales and media channels. This system could include tactics such as corporate identity pieces, advertisements, web sites, brochures, sales tools and others.

Step 5: Brand Stewardship

The branding process never ends. It’s not enough to create and launch a brand. Ongoing brand stewardship is essential to consistency...which, as we have mentioned, is essential to your brand’s long-term success. This step includes monitoring, reviewing and evaluating brand communications. You also need to develop brand identity standards and enforce them ruthlessly, so all brand messages that reach the market are consistent.