

## **Module 1: So What Is A Brand Anyway? Transcript**

So let's get started. And to begin with, let's look at the outcomes of this program. Let's see what you're going to gain from spending time with us here focusing on your brand.

Well, in the first place, we want you to stand out from the crowd. We want your product or company name to leap out, to separate itself from the surrounding noise and the surrounding competition.

Next, we want to connect you with your audience. That means building an emotional, a significant meaning-laden connection with the people that you want to market to. We don't want that connection just to be brief, just for the moment. We want it to endure.

We want to build what we sometimes call brand loyalty so that customers come back to you time and again. And what's the bottom line?

The bottom line is sales. The purpose of effective branding is to increase your sales revenues. And we'll be looking at exactly how that happens in the course of this program.

Well, the first question we need to settle is - what is a brand anyway? It's one of those terms that people toss around and assume that everyone's in agreement with what we're talking about.

And what I've discovered as a brand consultant over many years is that actually different people have different views about what they mean by the word brand. So I think we need to get clear about that so that we're all on the same page. Let me dispense with one very, very common myth. I still have people come to me and say, "We need a brand," and when I talk to them further, what they're saying is "We need a new logo."

No. The brand is not the logo. The brand, of course, is expressed by the logo. It's expressed by many things. But the brand itself lies much deeper. The logo, if you like, those are visible, tangible signatures of the brand are just the tip of the iceberg.

Beneath is the much larger part of the brand, and that is the part that we're going to spend most of our time addressing during this program. And we'll explain exactly what we mean by that hidden, invisible, intangible but all-important dimension of the brand as we go along.

As I've already established, the purpose of branding is sales, and that means that if we're going to understand branding, we have to understand how people decide to buy something.

Well, there are three fundamentals of the buying decision that I'd like to draw your attention to here.

You may be familiar with the book *Blink*. It's a marvelous book by Malcolm Gladwell, and its focus is the extraordinary brief moments in which we make very, very important decisions. Well, branding belongs in the terrain of the blink. It's something that happens in an instant in time. It's a response, a largely unconscious, momentary response that people have at a fundamentally emotional level, and let's stress this emotional aspect.

Branding addresses people's visceral feelings, their gut, their sense of things, much more than their cognitive ideas and their rational thinking. Of course, rational elements have an important role to play in every buying decision. but there is no buying decision that doesn't have an emotional foundation.

Talking of foundations, what makes for a successful sale in any market is the experience of trust. There is no really enduring sale success without building that foundation of trust between the buyer and the seller. So those three things - the brevity of branding moment, the emotional dimension

and the foundation of trust - are three critical elements of the buying decision.

Back to our core question then - what is branding?

It's a planned response to your product or company name. The keyword here is actually planned because people will have a response anyway. They're going to feel something. It may be indifference. It may be excitement. It may be repulsion. They'll feel something when they encounter your product or company. The question is - can you influence that response? Can you plan ahead what you would like that response to be? And then can you stack all the odds in favor of the most positive response showing up?

Let me boil this down to something very simple because you're probably beginning to think, well, it's going to vary according to what the product is and what the service is and what the environment is and what the target market is, and that's true. But there's an underlying something that is present with every buying decision. Something you can sum up in five words:

I feel good about this. That's what happens inside when people pull out their credit card or their checkbook or their cash and make that buying decision. It's the moment when they say, standing in the store or they're sitting at their computer at an online shopping cart or in a corporate sales situation - I really don't mind what the environment is. There's a certain point where the buyer says to him or herself, "I feel good about this. Let's go ahead." That is the feeling, the response that your brand wants to generate.

Once that feeling is generated, you're really establishing a bond, a personal connection between that individual and the company providing the product or service. So I want to imprint on you a little slogan. Here it is:

the brand builds the bond that drives the buying decision. When you understand that, you'll realize how important branding is, that this isn't some cosmetic periphery to your marketing operation. It's absolutely the core of what is going to decide whether or not you're successful in the market.

So if branding is all about the buying decision, how can we learn about that moment in time when people decide to buy? Can we do market research on it? Yes, that's a good idea. Can we read books about it? Yes, that's a good idea. But here's the simplest way to understand the buying decision: watch yourself when you're out shopping. See what happens to you emotionally and mentally when you're deciding between one brand and another.

So our first action step in this program is for you to go shopping, all right? And if you turn to the workbook, you'll see some very simple directions as to what to look out for while you're shopping because the point is not necessarily the shopping itself, although I hope you enjoy it and get something nice. But the real point is cultivating an attitude of observation so that you begin to learn from yourself some fundamental principles about how people choose between brands and make the decision to buy. So pause this presentation. Take a look at the action step and either do it now or commit to doing it as soon as you can. And then when you're ready, we'll continue with the next part of this module.

Let's assume you've done that action step, and we're going on to look at the environment in which branding takes place.

That environment is what I call our ADD culture, a culture that is infested with distractions, more and more distractions. We are pulled this way and that. If you ever watch the news these days on television, you'll see that there's a newscaster telling you one story. There's a flood of images moving around in the background, and then there's another whole stream of stories running along the bottom of the screen about something totally different. That picture, to my mind, summarizes the mental state of our culture, and

it's the mental state in which you're trying to imprint your brand. So let's get real about the challenge. It's very, very hard to capture people's attention in this scattered and distracted culture.

Researchers have calculated that individually we each receive some 3,000 to 5,000 marketing messages per day, and the number keeps growing. How are you going to make your message come across amidst all that noise? Well, first of all, you need to become really sensitized to how distracting and distracted the mental environment is in which your brand will show up.

So we have another action step here, which is again encouraging you to become more conscious, more observant of the way the buying decisions are made. And this time you're going to actually alert yourself to the number of marketing messages to which you're exposed.

Now, remember these will include direct advertisements but also implicit messages. They might be sponsors on a public radio station. They might be a little banner ad on a website. They might be a message at the bottom of an e-mail. There are all sorts of ways in which we are infected with marketing messages that are below the radar, and they become so common and so multiple that we cease to really notice that this is going on. But it's very important to be aware of it if we're to understand how to effectively cut through the noise and make ourselves heard. So pause the presentation. Do this action step, and we'll be ready to go on with the module.

Let's assume you've done that action step. Now, we've looked at the problem. We need to look for a solution.

And what I want to talk about here is what I call the power of singularity. See, marketers, all of us who are in the business of marketing, whether it's because we own our own company or we're marketing somebody else's product, we have a tendency to think that more is more. And specifically that the more reasons that we can give someone to buy our product or

service, the more persuasive we'll be. So we start piling on one message after another, one benefit after another. And actually, all we do then is vanish into the surrounding clutter. Multiplicity is the problem we're dealing with. We don't need more of that. What we need is to find a single powerful point at the very center of our brand. And a lot of what I'll be sharing with you in this program has to do with finding that single critical point.

Sometimes when I'm talking to clients, I talk about acupuncture. I don't know if you've ever experienced acupuncture, but it's a rather remarkable process in which a skilled doctor will find that one tiny point that energizes the entire system. And that's what branding is really all about. We're going to look into the details of how we apply that principle in the course of this program.

I'd like you to take a moment to pause and review this module. This is your opportunity to pick out the main points to identify questions arising and to see in which areas you might need help from outside. So pause and do the module review, and then we'll be ready to move on to the next module, which introduces what I call the Brand Triangle.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long tail on the 'n'.