

## *Your Brilliant Brand*

### **Module 2: *The Brand Triangle* Transcript**

We're here with the second module of Your Brilliant Brand, and it's called The Brand Triangle. We'll explain the triangle in a moment, but I want to reiterate something that we established at the end of the last module when we talked about the power of singularity. And the point that we were making was that in a cluttered, distracted and distracting mental environment,

the only way that we're going to have success with our branding is if we practice extreme focus, if we direct people's energy and attention to a single point. The question that's addressed by the brand triangle is how to find that point.

So let's now take a look at the brand triangle itself. Here it is. And there's the point we are looking for in the center of the triangle. Needless to say there are three sides to the triangle. At the bottom there, the base of triangle is the most important part of it, and that is your brand audience, the people that you're marketing to, and we're going to learn a lot about them. And let me establish something right now that we're going to go into in more detail. What really matters about this brand audience is what they care about, what matters to them at an emotional, desiring, concerning level.

The next side of the brand triangle is your product. Now, of course, your product is important to your branding, but what I want to point out to you here is that it's only one of three sides of the triangle. See, many people go about their branding just by looking at that one side. They stare long and hard at their product or service and they say, "Well, what's important about this? What's our key benefit? What's the great thing about our product? There's our brand." No. We're going to find the focal point of the brand by looking at the meeting place, the point of connection between what you bring to the market, your product or service, and what this audience wants.

Now, let's assume we found that magical point where your product and your audience meet. We've got something else to consider because we want that point to be unique to you. We don't want it to be shared with anyone else. So that brings us to the third side of the brand triangle, the competition. And what we're looking for in the competition is the space, the gap, the thing they left out. We want to look at the competitive space so that we can find that point in the middle which answers the three criteria - first that it matters to your audience, second that it's true to your product and third that it's missing from the competition.

Let's look at the base of the triangle, the brand audience. We need to know about them. Now, a lot of people, when they start in marketing, they get very enamored by the whole question of demographics. And demographics are important. It is useful to know whether you're marketing to 30-somethings or 40-somethings or 50-somethings, whether your audience is predominantly male or predominantly female, what their economic status is, where they are geographically. All those things, those demographic factors are important. But why are they important? They're only important inasmuch as they reveal to you something about what matters to those people, what they care about.

The real question that you want to know about your brand audience is what's going in their hearts and minds —because that is where the brand is going to touch them.

This image here, by the way, is a sonogram, and I sometimes tell my students, "I want you to become a walking sonogram. I want you to become so cultivated in seeing into people's hearts and minds that it's as if you are there yourself." This is the art of jumping out of your own skin and feeling the life and the concerns and the anxieties of somebody who may not be like you at all, who may be very different in their priorities. Once you can get inside the skin of another person in that way, you are well underway to building a strong brand because you are then managing the base of that all-important triangle.

So what are the questions that are going to help us identify what's going on in the hearts and minds of our brand audience?

Well, very simply we want to know what they want. What do they aspire to? What do they dream of? What do they long for? And then conversely, we want to know what they're moving away from.

What do they fear? What do they hate? What bugs them? There's a related question, which you could say is almost the same thing, but I always separate it.

And that is - what are their frustrations? And I mean here specifically, when they've tried in the past to get what they want or to deal with their problem, what has baffled them? What did they run up against that has prevented them from finding the solution? Knowing their frustrations is enormously helpful in identifying your own brand message.

And finally, you want to know the level of knowledge and sophistication that your brand audience has. This is going to be very helpful in aiming your message, in languaging your brand in a way that connects with people. So you don't talk down to them and don't go over their heads.

Well, how are we going to find all this out? How are we going to get answers to these questions? We're going to have obviously do some kind of research, but this research is really simple -- much simpler than people often make it out to be.

The point is to find these samples, representatives of our brand audience and then --- simply ask them.

So don't be intimidated here by the whole notion of market research and massively expensive and high-flown research programs. You can do an awful lot of great research on a pure guerilla level. You can find a few people who are in your market and chat with them. You can do very low-cost surveys, using a tool like SurveyMonkey.com, which I always

recommend to my students and clients. Find ways to simply ask questions and make it a habit. This is not just a one-off thing. In my experience of working with some very successful businesspeople, we're talking about an under-practiced art - the art of asking your brand audience what matters to them.

Now, let me emphasize here: what many of the business owners do -- and it's a good thing to do --- is solicit the opinions of their customers of their product or service. That's a useful to know, and business owners gravitate to it because they're always very nervous about what people think of them. And rightly so, they should be concerned about that. That's not really where our focus is here, though, in developing your brand. We want to know about what matters to your brand audience before they've ever heard of you. What is it that they're looking for? What is it that's worrying them? What's frustrating them? These are the questions that we want to ask the people that you're marketing to - and we want to ask them at that point where they are entering into a buying situation where they might choose you or somebody else.

So our action step here then is to do a little practice in creating a questionnaire and in identifying the kind of questions that you would want to ask representatives of your brand audience. So pause the presentation and take a look at that action step.

Let's assume that you've completed that action step, and we will continue with this module. The second side of the triangle, as you recall, is your product, and you have a job now to get to know your own product or service, which might seem a little bizarre because you probably invented it. So how could you possibly need to learn about it? Well, what you're actually wanting to learn is how your product would appear from the outside. See, when you are the creator or marketer of a product or service, you have an inside-out view of it, and it takes quite a lot of mental and emotional effort to separate yourself from that perspective and begin looking at your product or service from the point of view of a complete stranger for whom this is not the most important thing in the world, for

whom it's one of many possible choices and may not be a very high priority anyway. What does your product or service look like from that perspective?

So there are some simple questions that you can ask at this stage, and they're going to be familiar to you, I think, the concept of benefits and features. But let's identify them clearly.

A benefit is what I get from using your product, what happens in my life or my business or my health or whatever it is that is good for me because I bought your product or service.

Features are things about your product or service that deliver the benefit. What does your product actually do? What is its functionality that enables it to give this benefit that we've identified? Those are the features.

And there's a third element you don't hear so much about but I think is also very important, and that's what are the qualities of the product, what's the feel or character of the product. So is the product a fun product or is it very serious? Is it rather intimidating? Is it really easy and friendly? Is it terribly cool? Is it rather traditional and old fashioned? These character qualities are a part of the picture of the product from the point of view of somebody standing on the outside.

So our action step here is for you to create a simple profile of your product, looking at it from the perspective of somebody who doesn't know it very well, who's coming across it for the first time. So pause this presentation and do that action step, and we'll move on then to the third side of the triangle.

Let's assume you've done that action step. We're going on now to the third and last side of the brand triangle, which of course is the competition. Now it's important that you understand what matters about your competition for you to study. Most product marketers get very fascinated by the competitors' product itself. They get really interested in whether its functionality is a little bit faster or smoother or nicer than theirs. And that's

all interesting stuff, but it actually has very little to do with branding because in fact an inferior product may be better branded and therefore may be selling better than your product.

What you really want to be studying is your competitor's branding. That's to say what are the messages that are being communicated around the competitor product. What's the basis of the connection they make with their audience? And there's a nice, little quote here that I'll share with you. I forget where I picked it up, but it was that the purpose of advertising is not to sell stuff; it's to scare the competition. And the gist of this is that when you understand that the competitor is putting out messages into the marketplace that are filling up, as it were, the brand space, when you grasp that, then you can start looking for the gaps that they are leaving in the brand arena. Our question on this side of the triangle is a negative one: What is missing from the competitors' branding?

So how are you going to research your competition?

Well, in the first place, you want to look at the language that they're using to identify and speak about their product or service, and I've used the phrase keywords here that is, of course, very much related to Internet search these days. But it's really a broader principle that there are certain terms or ideas or concepts or language pieces that will keep showing up in your competitors' marketing information. So knowing those words will give you an indication of where their brand is centered.

And then more explicitly, you can begin collecting the different messages that they're putting out about why their product or service is so great. And you want to scan those, because as you look at those messages and you look at the words that they keep using, you begin to get a feel of what territory, what piece of brand real estate, as it were, that they have occupied.

Now, what's really important - we'll come to see why this is so important soon enough - is you want, if possible, to pin down their big idea. If you're

fortunate - and this is actually very common - your competitor won't actually have a big idea. It'll be quite difficult for you to find the central concept of their brand, because the brand is no good, but you want to make an effort to find it all the same. Needless to say, by the time we finish, everyone will know the big idea in your brand. We'll come to that later.

So the point of all this focus on the competition, once again, is to find the gap, is to find the missing areas within the competitive branding activity which gives you a chance to claim an idea or concept or brand focus that is entirely and exclusively yours.

So let's do an action step on this. Pause this presentation. Take a look at the action step, and you'll see some guidelines there to help you research the competitive environment in which your own brand is going to show up.

So let's assume you've done that action step, and let's wrap this up by just reviewing the brand triangle. We've now looked at all three sides: the brand audience - what matters to them, what drives them, what motivates them; your product - how does it appear to someone encountering it for the first time; the competition - what's missing from their branding. When we've identified the three sides of the brand triangle, we can find that sweet spot in the center, which is going to give focus and singularity to your brand. And we'll discover how to do that as we move along.

So now, let's complete this module, and there's an action step as always and module review which gives you a chance to look at the key points in this module and identify any questions you have. And then we'll be ready to move on to the third module, which is all about that concept at the center of the brand triangle called Your Singular Idea.

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