

Your Brilliant Brand

Module 3: *Your Singular Idea* Transcript

Welcome to module three of Your Brilliant Brand, and here we're going to focus on something we're calling Your Singular Idea.

Let's begin with a very simple question: what does Volvo stand for? What is the Volvo brand all about? And it's a no-brainer. Clearly the answer is safety.

Here's an example of their marketing literature, the Volvo Saved My Life Club in which proud owners tell their stories about how they were able to live another day, thanks to driving a Volvo.

Well, here's another question - are Volvos the safest cars on the road? Some might say no; some might say yes. But here's a different question: - does Volvo exclusively own the safety concept as their brand idea? And here the answer is surely yes because if you watch other car manufacturers try to muscle in on the safety positioning, they always end up playing second fiddle to Volvo even if they possibly have, technically speaking, a better story to tell.

So what we're looking for for your brand is that you too have exclusive ownership of an idea, one that is of compelling interest to your audience—and that will be the singular idea of your brand.

Now, let me make an important distinction here, and that is that the singular idea is not necessarily a slogan or a tagline. We certainly want to get it down to one or two words. I love that Volvo can be boiled down to one word, safety, but safety is not Volvo's slogan. Here is their slogan: for life. If you take a look at the tagline for life, you'll see that the idea of safety is embedded within it as it is within just about every kind of marketing communication Volvo makes.

So talking of cars, the singular idea is like the hidden engine of your brand. Once you've got it down, it's going to inform and guide everything you communicate about your brand.

Let me give you a few examples of singular ideas that I've created for clients over the past decade or so.

The first one there was a large utility company serving a very particular geographic region. And the problem that company had was that they were falling in the polls. They were given poor approval ratings. Utility companies get rated by their consumers, and they watch to see how popular or unpopular they were. And my client was becoming significantly unpopular.

We knew that we couldn't really convincingly persuade our audience to love the utility. Who wants to get an electricity bill? But what we did was to identify values that the companies shared with its audience, and so we created this singular idea of shared values. And once we'd agreed on this singular idea, it informed everything the company communicated - through brochures, through billboards, through a TV campaign we ran, through radio ads and so forth.

Another company here is in the mergers and acquisitions business. And of course when you are in the business of acquiring companies - and that's their emphasis - you're looking at growth. And we wanted to emphasize the systematic quality of their approach to acquisitions, so we created the singular idea "growth engineers."

Another very, very different company makes a fabulous, very clever, little product that uses music to get small children to do those household chores they hate to do. And for them, we created this very simple singular idea that chores equals fun.

And finally here, I had a homebuilder client building high-end homes in a very challenging market environment. And after getting to know them well,

I realized how important the relationship with the builder was for their particular clientele. And this builder demonstrated an extraordinary level of care and genuine human concern for their clients. They were very much loved by all the past clients they had who seemed to remain friends for years. So we created this singular idea of building with heart. So those are just some simple examples to get you into the swing of thinking in terms of finding your own singular idea.

Now, when you're looking for that singular idea, there are very particular criteria that you want to bear in mind, and they are actually based on the brand triangle.

First of all, your singular idea needs to be of vital interest to your brand audience. You may be tempted to start out with something fabulous about your product or company. If it's not of compelling interest to your audience, if it doesn't touch something that they are yearning for or concerned about, then you haven't found an effective singular idea.

Now, having said that, the singular idea must be true to your product. It may not be the thing you most particularly love about your product because as I say the emphasis is on what matters to your brand audience, not what matters to you. But you should be authentic and aligned with your product, because the brand is making a promise that you need to be able to keep. So your singular idea must be true to your product.

And thirdly, of course, you want your singular idea to be unique in your market. Even if it's true to the product and important to the audience, if somebody else out there has already nabbed it and is branding their competing product with that idea, you don't want to use it.

So this gives us an action step to create your singular idea. So pause this presentation for a moment and turn to your workbook and take a look at that action step.

So I'm assuming you've done that action step, but I want to emphasize something here that we've done this process as a quick training exercise for the purposes of learning. In reality, I'd encourage you to spend a lot of time and thought on finding your singular idea. This is not a casual matter. Your singular idea is the single most powerful tool that you have to give focus to your brand. It's going to inform everything you do, everything you communicate, every decision you make, internally as well as externally.

In fact, it's important that you own your singular idea as if it were the soul of the company, and you need to get everybody in your team on board with that idea because once it becomes second nature, once it becomes part of, as it were, the subconscious of the company, you will then always be on brand. That way, you'll be able to cut through the noise and make an indelible impression on people's hearts and minds. They will be impacted by the clarity and sense of direction and purpose that your brand has.

So now, we've reached the end of this short module, and I encourage you to do the module review. Take a look at the key points here. Ask yourself are there any questions that arise for you in this process, and see if there's any area in this where you might need help from an expert on the outside.

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