

## Addressing Brand Research in a Narrative Context

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From time to time, CEOs and Marketing directors ask themselves “do we really understand our own brand well enough and do we need to reposition it”. This is a legitimate question of any director or senior officer of a commercial or even not-for-profit organisation in fulfilling their legal obligations of care and diligence.

### ***But what happens next?***

What happens next is really important.

To a great extent we are over the era of directors changing logos in ignorance and a vain attempt to improve the performance of the brand. The poor graphic designer gets a brief that is nothing more than “can you make our brand more relevant” by which he is being asked to change the logo design and miraculously change the company fortunes. This may indeed change the company fortunes but not necessarily in the desired direction.

Many organisations realise that they need assistance from a brand or marketing consultant to help develop a position against which all future advertising, creative and design executions can be tested. They also recognise that they probably need to draw on market research to inform strategy development.

It seems logical to undertake brand research and then have the consultant interpret the results. Unfortunately, this often leads to the research focusing on unimportant issues and failing to address what is key to the unique narrative organisation.

The brand consultant and the research company need to work together from the start.

## Your Logo is Not Your Brand

*“A logo is not a brand. Rather, it is a memory hook – a reminder of a brand. A brand is the narrative that surrounds an organisation. It incorporates mission and it incorporates culture (how the employees talk about the organisation) but mostly it is a consolidation of the stories customers (or stakeholders) are telling about the company.” (See: <http://www.linkedin.com/pulse/your-logo-brand-michael-neale?trk=mp-author-card> )*

When people are asked to name the three biggest brands in the world, they generally have an idea what those companies would be. If they are then asked to describe those brands, they generally talk about the size of the company, what they do, what they stand for, perhaps even some negatives about those brands. They don’t describe the logo.

# White Paper

In the situation of a multi-stakeholder non-commercial brand (tourist and local government regions, government service providers, universities, museums/arts and cultural institutions etc.), the narrative is often much more complex. In these circumstances, many different narratives risk working against each other, sometimes contradicting each other. Successful brand management under these circumstances focuses on finding the common essence of the narrative.

On this basis, the key objective of brand story development is to harmonise and formalise the multiple brand narratives into a single brand story that can be owned by all stakeholders. This brand story can then form the basis for evaluating and managing all creative executions and marketing initiatives.

## ***What about start-up businesses?***

Developing a brand story is just as vital for start-up business, technology companies and business-to-business enterprises as it is for consumer products companies; perhaps even more so.

The key tool for the entrepreneur is what is sometimes known as “the elevator pitch”. The ability to tell potential break-through customers and investors what your company can do and why in a chance meeting in an elevator – in not more than 60 seconds – is often the difference between success and failure.

Brand story is at the very heart of the elevator pitch.

## **Integrated Brand Story Development**

Literally Brilliant has a sophisticated brand story development process that is evidence based and rooted in research. It seeks to use existing research to provide insight and then augment that with further research when required. Learnings from the research stage are converted into key message strings of the narrative which are then combined to generate a consolidated brand story.

The brand story is then used to form the basis of logo, visual identity and marketing asset development where this is required by the scope of the project.

In early 2015, Literally Brilliant started working with a highly credentialed research company (**newfocus** – see: [www.newfocus.com.au](http://www.newfocus.com.au)) to facilitate a fully integrated approach to the research and consultancy roles. At the heart of this joint methodology is a mentoring process that includes the internal company team as a crucial collaborative player in the project team; drawing on tacit brand knowledge and existing intelligence whilst simultaneously preparing the internal team for a more confident implementation of the resultant brand strategy.

To find out more about this new process, see: [www.newfocus.com.au/what-we-do/brand-strategy-development/](http://www.newfocus.com.au/what-we-do/brand-strategy-development/)