

Need to amplify growth? Sharpen your brand proposition.

Amplifying the growth of brands in today's complex marketing and retail environment is difficult and yet as marketers, this is the job we're paid to do. As consumers, we buy products and services to meet the needs in our lives whether they be more on the functional or emotional side of things. Yet, if I were to ask you why does your brand exist and why is it better than any other at fulfilling the needs of consumers, could you quickly and concisely answer? If not, this is where growth amplification efforts for your brand need to start.

The objective of building an effective brand proposition is an exercise in identifying the white space your brand can capitalize upon. It's an exercise, that if done correctly, provides your brand with a range of growth opportunities to pursue that not only impacts brand messaging but also strongly informs innovation pipelines and category management stories. Let's take a look at the different components involved in building strong brand propositions.

Growth Objective

Begin with the end in mind. Ask yourself, where does your brand need to be 3 years from now in terms of overall unit sales and what level of unit growth is needed within each year? This may seem fundamental but without having this defined, it becomes difficult to develop sharp brand propositions capable of delivering the level of growth you're needing.

Define Your Audience(s)

Based on the needed growth objectives, which audience or audiences will you look to for delivering the required growth? Within each audience, what's the behavior change that's required vs what's occurring today? A simple way to capture this information is to write it as a statement; What would motivate Millennial Men to purchase Acme brand a minimum of 2 times a month and purchase 3 units per trip?

Identify Your Audience's Motivations

As stated earlier, audiences buy products and services to meet needs in their lives. At Public Label, we call these motivations. So, what motivations are your target audience(s) looking to satisfy that your brand could become the solution to? For example, if we were marketing a healthier frozen entrée product and our target audience was a female millennial frozen entrée avoider, three motivations come to mind that our brand could potentially be the solution to; 1) Replenish my body post workout, 2) Offset my poor eating habits throughout the day or 3) Help me eat healthier at work. Motivations are powerful in that they quickly take brands out of the traditional categories in which they compete and open up new avenues of growth. Once we identify the motivations our brand could effectively fulfill, we then size each motivation to provide a directional understanding as to which ones possess the greatest volume upside for the brand.



Identify The Needs Underlying Each Motivation

Within each motivation, there's a range of functional and emotional needs our target audience has that defines the successful delivery of that motivation. We must identify these needs and then understand which ones are most important to our audience and the depth to which they are being satisfied by existing brands today. We assess this quantitatively and map each need across these two dimensions to understand where white space exists within the motivation that our brand could capitalize upon. We call this exercise 'Needs Mapping' and an example of its output is below.



Green Area (High Importance, Low Satisfaction Needs)

This area represent true white space as these needs are of high importance but aren't being fully satisfied today by existing brand offerings.

Yellow Area (High Importance, High Satisfaction Needs)

Less of an opportunity as these high importance needs are being satisfied by existing brands today. However, this could still be an opportunity, if you believe your brand can fulfill against that need more effectively.

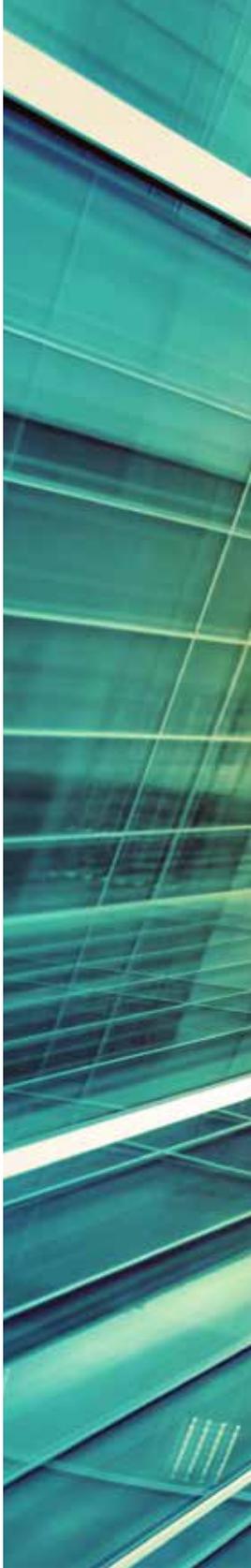
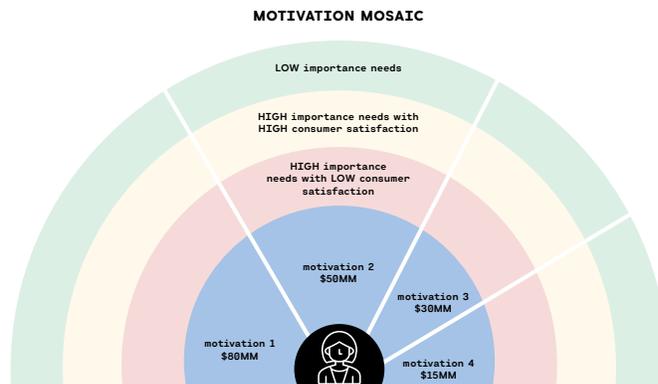
Red Area (Low Importance Needs)

Little brand opportunity.

The primary benefit of Needs Mapping is to identify communication white space for the brand, however, that's not the only benefit. Needs Mapping also helps inform the innovation pipeline as it directs innovation teams to the most important needs within a motivation and allows them to evaluate the brand's ability to effectively deliver against those needs today and where additional innovation may be needed to more strongly own in the future.

With the motivations sized and the importance of the needs identified, we pull them both together into what we call a Motivation Mosaic.

The Motivation Mosaic allows a brand team to assess motivations from largest to smallest and the needs within each from most to least important. Within the Motivation Mosaic, we also highlight where competition is focused to truly provide a deep understanding of where a brand's white space exists. But again, this is a multi-use tool allowing brands to not only identify where the greatest communication opportunities exist but it also provides great insight into the construction of an effective category management story, clearly articulating where opportunities exist in the category, the role competitive brands are playing and the white space your brand will be pursuing to drive growth for itself and the category.



Cultural Relevance

Understanding movements within today’s culture is extremely important to delivering brand relevance through better connected brand messages. Referring back to our frozen entrée example, let’s say we’ve identified the following opportunity for the brand.

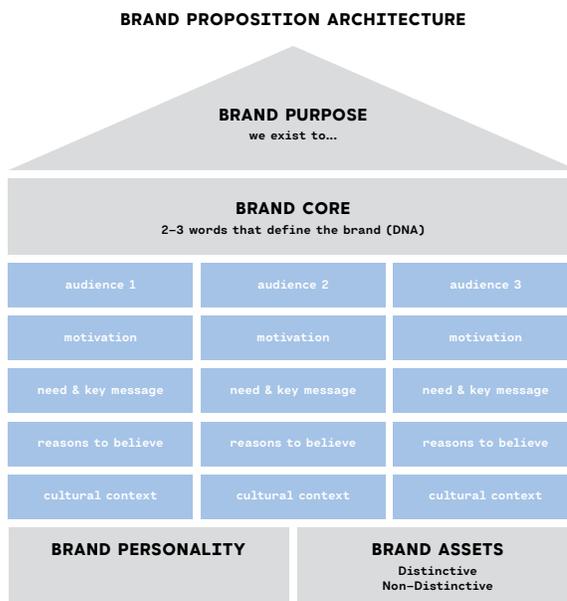
- Audience** Millennial women who are frozen entrée rejectors
- Motivation** Replenish my body post workout
- White Space Need** Prolong my feeling of accomplishment
- Message** Acme brand helps you maintain your momentum post workout

The question then becomes what cultural movements, within the Millennial workout community, offer the best opportunity to deliver differential brand relevance and deliver a better-connected brand message. Similar to the approach we take to understanding motivations, we identify and size leading cultural movements within the workout space to identify which movements are most significant and meaningful to our audience. In this case, spin classes, particularly the FLY brand of spin class was a large movement within the Millennial workout community. Therefore, our brand message was then presented through the lens of ‘maintaining your momentum’ after FLY spin class, driving strong relevancy for our message. It’s important to note that cultural contexts associated with the brand message can and do change, based on our audiences and their interests. The cultural context for our message was spin classes but now with the reality of our pandemic world, the message of ‘maintaining your momentum’ is being applied to home workouts. Through trend tracking and social listening, the cultural context associated with your message can be understood allowing you to maintain real time relevance of your messaging.

Pulling It All Together And Creating Your Brand Propositions

The work outlined above simply identifies areas of communication opportunity for the brand and how best to drive relevancy of those messages by tapping into the right movements within culture. The next step is to combine those messaging opportunities with the equity of the brand to ensure fit and ownership through the tonality of the brand and its distinctive assets. The combination of these two pieces creates your Brand Propositions and yes, propositions is plural because a brand can have more than one brand proposition as each proposition is different based on audience, motivation, the chosen need within the motivation and the cultural context you choose to link your message to.

The tool we use for combining messaging and equity elements of the brand is the Brand Proposition Architecture, which is similar to a brand architecture. Within the Brand Proposition Architecture there are both fixed and variable components of the brand. The ‘fixed’ elements represent the equity of the brand and do not change frequently.



- Fixed Brand Elements (Brand Equity)
- Variable Brand Elements
 - Target Audience
 - Motivation
 - Need & Key Message
 - Reasons to Believe
 - Cultural Context





The 'variable' piece captures elements that can change yr/yr as you pursue new growth opportunities and it's these that drive the differentiation in brand propositions.

In close, brands simply don't have one brand proposition but rather many, all grounded in the equity of the brand and specifically geared to meet the unmet/underserved needs of their targeted audiences better than any other options.

So, if your brand is losing share, struggling to find growth or is growing and needs to accelerate, sharpening your Brand Proposition is a great place to start.



Brian Kittelson
EVP, Managing Director, U.S.

Brian isn't just a seasoned executive with more than 20 years in this business. He's a hybrid of both consumer and retail expertise. That's a big deal, especially when you're tasked with solving the kinds of marketing challenges in today's world. He spent most of his career at General Mills where he built their shopper marketing organization and grew some of the world's biggest brands. With a passion for the outdoors and fitness, you can often find Brian out exploring or training for his next big adventure

brian.kittelson@publiclabelagency.com

