



THE STRATEGIST'S HANDBOOK

Some useful starting points
for original thinking

LONDON
STRATEGY
UNIT

A note from London Strategy Unit

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UNIT



We put together this little handbook because we believe that original thinking is a vital ingredient in any successful strategy. The ability to draw inspiration from varied sources and bring it together creatively will always be a competitive advantage regardless of what agency, channel, company or industry you're working in.

The handbook contains a range of starting points to help kick-start your thinking whenever you feel stuck, lacking inspiration or just don't want to repeat the same old methodology as everyone else. In a sense, we created the handbook we wished we'd had back when we were starting out.

We've split it into three sections:

1. Useful tools and exercises
2. How to be more useful to your company
3. Intellectually stimulating websites

Don't see it as a list of 'rules' you must follow, but instead try to find your own way of reading and using it.

Good luck.

Audrea Norton

Strategist, London Strategy Unit

SECTION 1:

USEFUL TOOLS AND EXERCISES

Charting luxury loyalty
and reward schemes

Saks Fifth Avenue

Dior

Internal
(Self-satisfaction)

NESPRESSO

MAYBACH

VERTU

Christofle
Paris

HERVE
LEGER

Smith
Mr & Mrs Smith

POSITIONING MAPS

Positioning maps are ubiquitous, but they still help you spot gaps, challenges and opportunities, understand who competitors are, or even help simplify a product offering.

Tangible reward (Product)

NETJETS

External
(Display)

Virgin
HOLIDAYS
HIP HOTELS

JIMMY CHOO

ROLEX

BURBERRY

Y.CO

Intangible reward (Service)

INTERESTING?

USEFUL?

ENTERTAINING?

WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT MY IDEA?

A useful mental checklist for ideas and more.

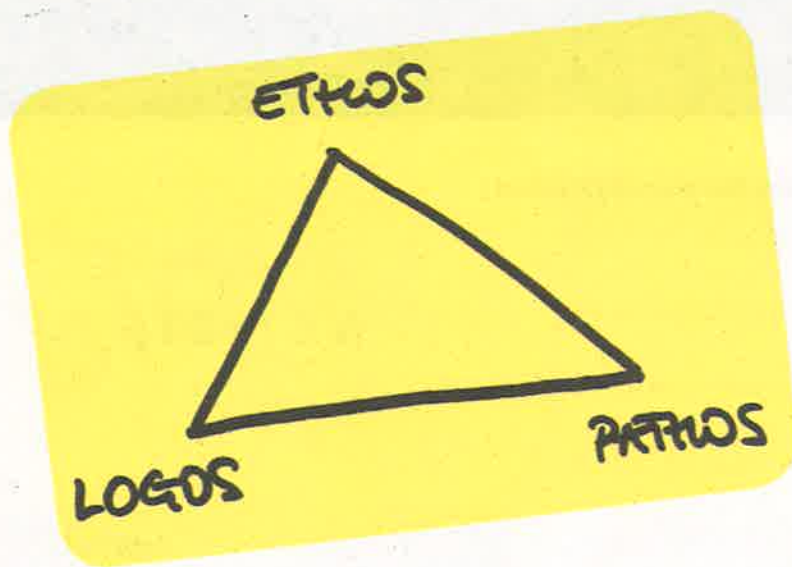
The ultimate payoff:
(can be outer or inner directed,
e.g. status or peace of mind)

The benefit to the target audience
(physical, mental or emotional)

A tangible property
(e.g. size, appearance, taste, performance)

LADDERING

A classic tool, which - starting with a tangible product truth - helps you 'ladder up' to a value or state of mind.



ETHOS, LOGOS, PATHOS

Which is your argument based on?

Ethos relates to credibility (or character);
is your idea trustworthy?

Pathos is about emotional connection to an audience;
does your idea pull on the heartstrings?

Logos uses logical reasoning and supporting evidence;
is your argument rooted in concrete fact?

Get people to use the Internet more.

Chrome makes Internet
browsing fast and efficient.

Android allows mobile Internet
access from anywhere.

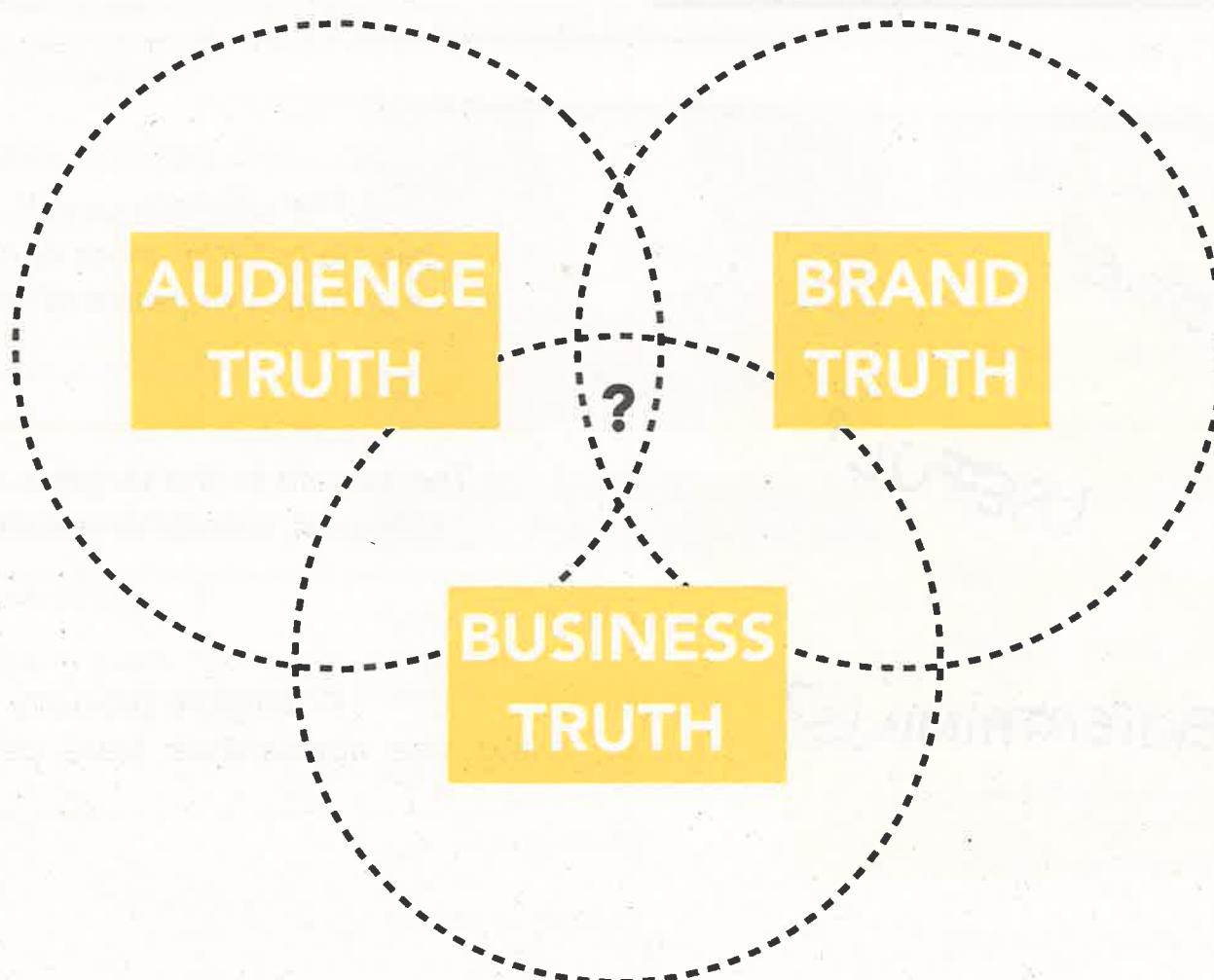
Now pushes content
customised by search history.

Fiber offers Internet
speeds 100 times faster.

Source: blindfiveyearold.com

STRATEGY IN 7 WORDS

An interesting thought from A. J. Kohn
(blindfiveyearold.com), almost all of Google's efforts are
focused on improving Internet access and speed, and most
Google products can be summarised in 7 words.



AUDIENCE, BRAND AND BUSINESS TRUTH VENN DIAGRAM

The distillation of three truths into one statement is both a great structure for presentations and a simple way to formulate a proposition.

THINKING, FAST AND SLOW



DANIEL
KAHNEMAN

SYSTEM 1 & SYSTEM 2 THINKING

System 1 operates automatically and quickly in order to help us make everyday decisions (e.g. putting the kettle on).

System 2 helps us deliberate and perform complex operations and other thought-consuming work.

How do you make your strategy work for both Systems?
What's the best way of integrating them?

FOR:

Who you want your customers to be

ONLY:

The one thing you do that's different

BECAUSE:

Reason why people should believe
your ONLY claim

Example:

For people who care about their health
and the planet

...**only** Method avoids using harsh
chemicals

...**because** we think you can be good to
the environment and still be able to clean.

Source: markpollard.net

FOR...ONLY...BECAUSE

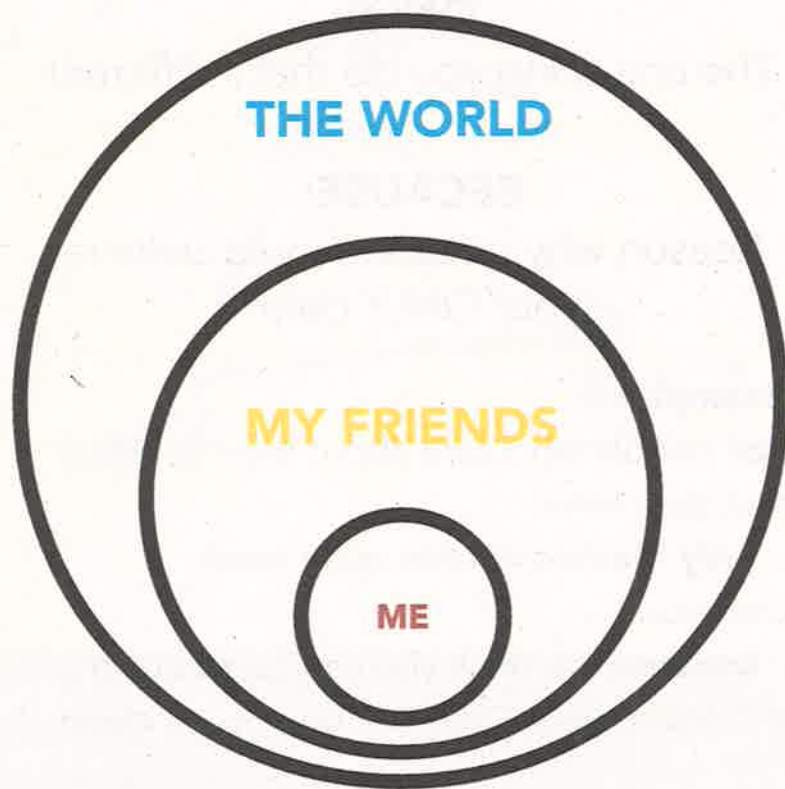
This is another simple way of distilling what you stand for
as a company or differentiating products in a portfolio.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

1. Define your objective
2. Read around the subject
3. Define barriers in the way
4. Identify strengths and things in your favour
5. Re-define your problem

IDENTIFYING A SOLUTION

6. List potential solutions
7. Write a list of pros and cons
8. Choose the most promising
9. Stress test or research it
10. Summarise your strategy and how it should work



WHY IS THE IDEA
INTERESTING TO...

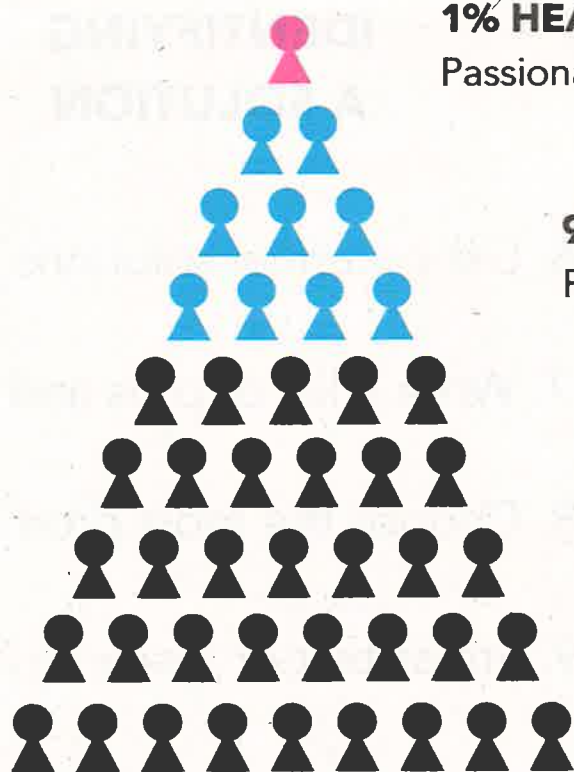
CULTURE

STORY	VS.	MESSAGE
RITUALS	VS.	BENEFITS
HEROES	VS.	SPOKESPEOPLE
LEXICON	VS.	NAMING
PURPOSE	VS.	POSITION
MEMBERS	VS.	CUSTOMERS
FAN-OWNED	VS.	COMPANY-OWNED
SPIRIT	VS.	LOYALTY
ORGANIC	VS.	OBVIOUS

Source: 22squared.com

CULTURE VS. BRAND

If you want your brand to catch on in popular culture, you have to start speaking the right language (not just marketing jargon).



1% HEAVY USERS OR CONTRIBUTORS

Passionate, active and engaged people

9% OCCASIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

People who post or contribute every now and then

90% LURKERS

People who observe, but don't feel the need to contribute

Source: Jakob Nielsen (2006)

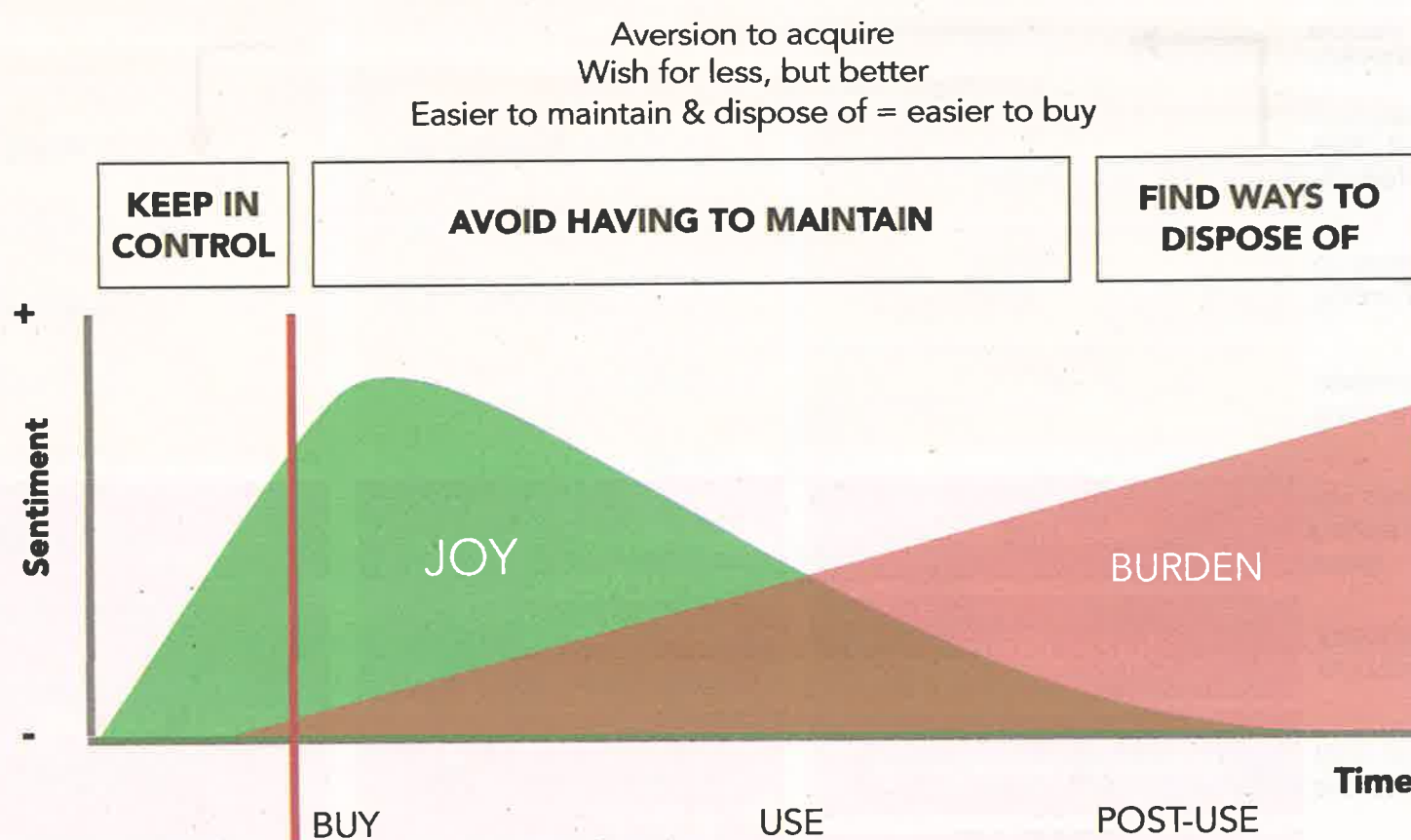
THE 90-9-1 RULE

How do you expect people to participate? How do they behave in other areas of their life? Here's a handy rule of thumb born out of a study of internet audiences.

	TO...	BY...
BUSINESS	To increase sales volume	...by recruiting new users
	To maintain sales volume	...by consolidating loyal users
	To generate sales leads	...by enhancing brand reputation
MARKETING	To enhance brand reputation	...by correcting a negative perception
	To consolidate loyal users	...by reminding them of the brand's benefits
	To recruit new users	...by bringing the brand to their attention
COMMS	To bring the brand to their attention	...by dramatising the benefit
	To remind them of the benefits	...by doing a side-by-side comparison
	To correct the negative perception	...by electing an 'expert' spokesperson

TO...BY

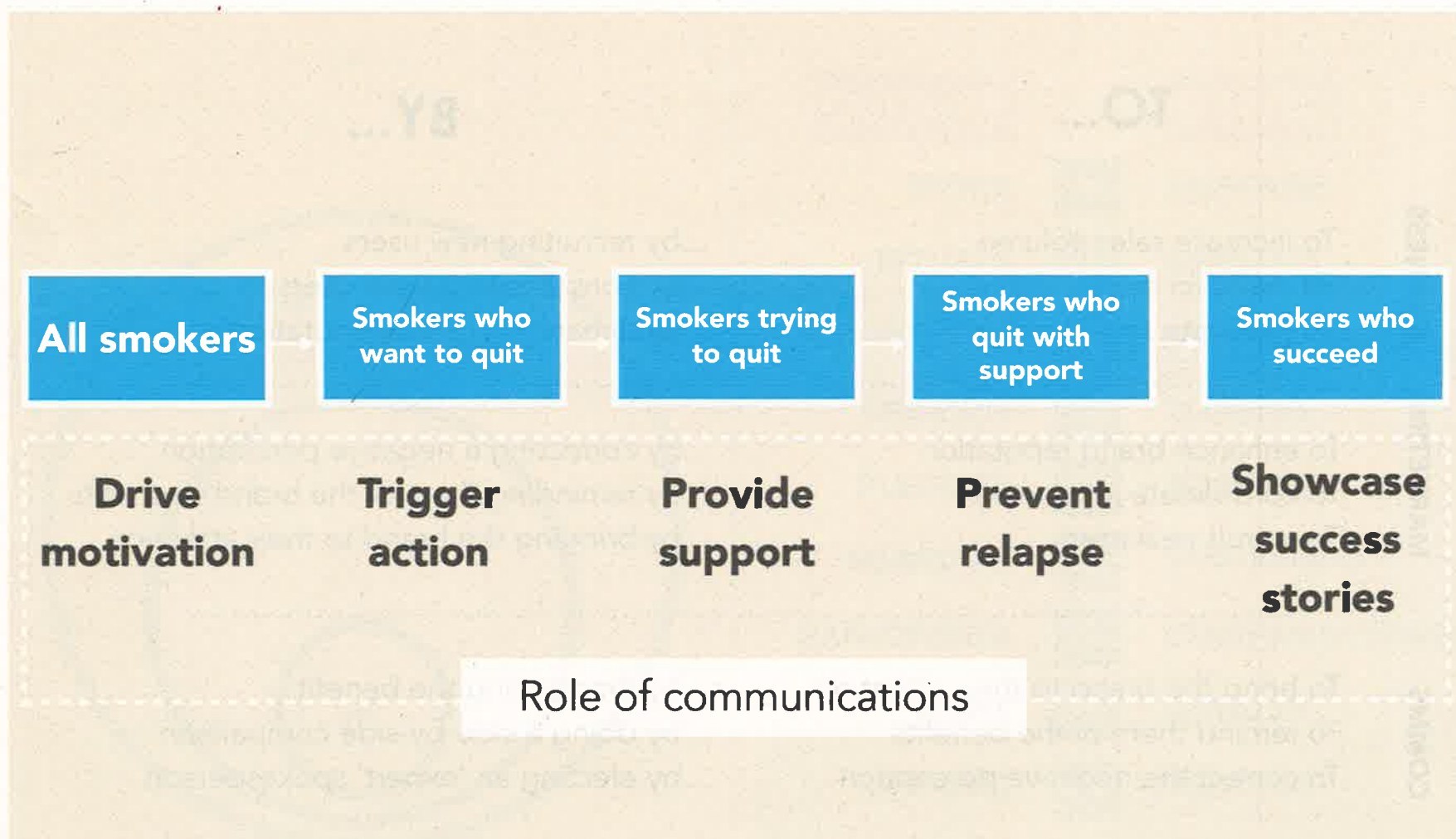
If you can construct a sentence that states your aim (i.e. 'to do X') and then follow up with a way of getting there (i.e. 'by doing Y'), then you're halfway to having a strategy.



Source: Shareable.net

OWNERSHIP CYCLE

Excitement builds in anticipation to and just after purchase, but what happens the rest of the time?
Consider the change in mood around your brand for this entire cycle.



BEHAVIOUR CHANGE FUNNEL

If you're aiming to change behaviour, consider how many hoops you need to get people to jump through, and therefore the role of communications at each stage.

A GOOD BRAND...	makes people want to buy	revenue up	short term PROFIT	COMMERCIAL VALUE
	creates drive internally	costs down		
	speeds up innovation	opportunities up		
	keeps people committed	risk down		
	gives you something good	benefit up	short term USEFULNESS + HAPPINESS	SOCIAL VALUE
	holds company to account	harm down		
	builds human and natural resources	resource creation up		
	encourages re-use and sharing	resource destruction down		
			long term PROSPECTS FOR GROWTH	
			long term SUSTAINABILITY	

Source: Wolff Olins Blog

HOW BRANDS PROVIDE VALUE

This matrix helps you understand the link between what brands do and the social or commercial value they generate.



Source: *The Hero & The Outlaw*

12 BRAND ARCHETYPES

Rooted in psychological personality profiles, these models can help you identify the symbolic role your brand could play in culture.

1. QUEST
2. ADVENTURE
3. PURSUIT
4. RESCUE
5. ESCAPE
6. REVENGE
7. THE RIDDLE
8. RIVALRY
9. UNDERDOG
10. TEMPTATION
11. METAMORPHOSIS
12. TRANSFORMATION
13. MATURATION
14. LOVE
15. FORBIDDEN LOVE
16. SACRIFICE
17. DISCOVERY
18. EXCESS
19. ASCENSION
20. DESCENSION

20 MASTER PLOTS

Ronald B. Tobias suggests there are 20 master plots used to build stories that engage and persuade audiences...



7 BASIC PLOTS

...and Christopher Booker (*The Seven Basic Plots*) further simplifies the number of possible plots to seven.

R.I.P.

Who would miss
your brand and why?

Who killed it?

Biggest accomplishment?

How did it live?

Who will take its place?

BRAND OBITUARY

What if your brand disappeared tomorrow?

TO DO

DATE

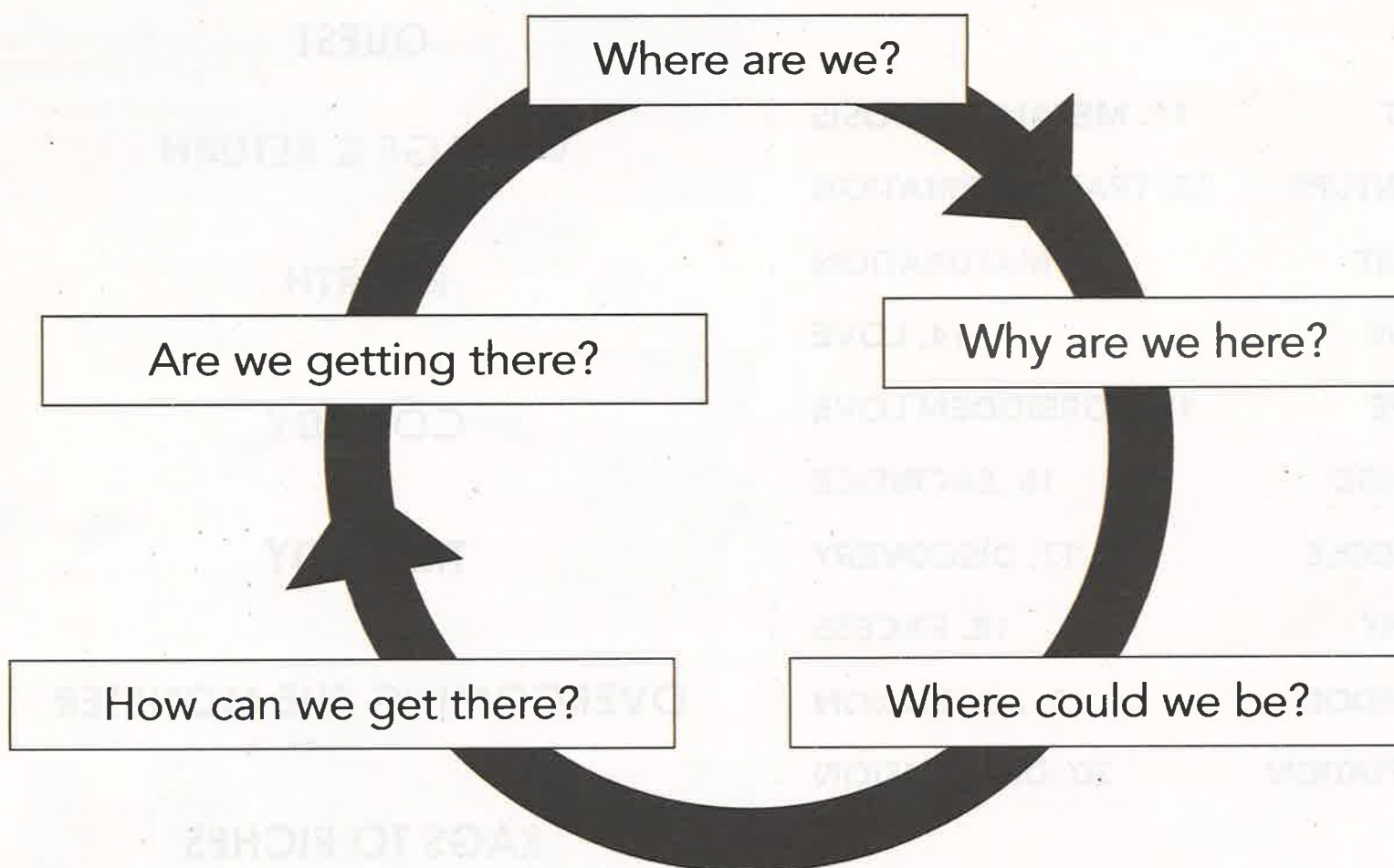
PRIORITY BY

TOPIC

No.	TASKS	DONE	ERRANDS	DONE
01	Problem:			
02	Define the key issue.			
03	Audience:			
04	Who is it addressed to?			
05	Theme:			
06	List relevant stimulus			
07	Opportunities?			
08	Assets to work with?			
09	Hunches?			
10	Criteria:			
11	What will you judge against?			
12	Hatch:			
13	Generate ideas and filter them.			

P.A.T.C.H - WORKSHOP CHECKLIST

A simple guideline on how to structure a workshop
(or figure out if you need one).



Source: A Master Class in Brand Planning

STEPHEN KING'S PLANNING CYCLE (1968)

And finally, an oldie but a goldie from the Godfather of Planning.

SECTION 2:

HOW TO BE MORE USEFUL TO YOUR COMPANY

Her Morning Elegance / Oren Lavie

QuarterPastWonderful 3 videos · Subscribe



QuarterPastWonderful · 15,091,130 views
Oren Lavie · Her Morning Elegance

Load a different playlist

Her Morning Elegance / Oren Lavie by QuarterPastWonderful



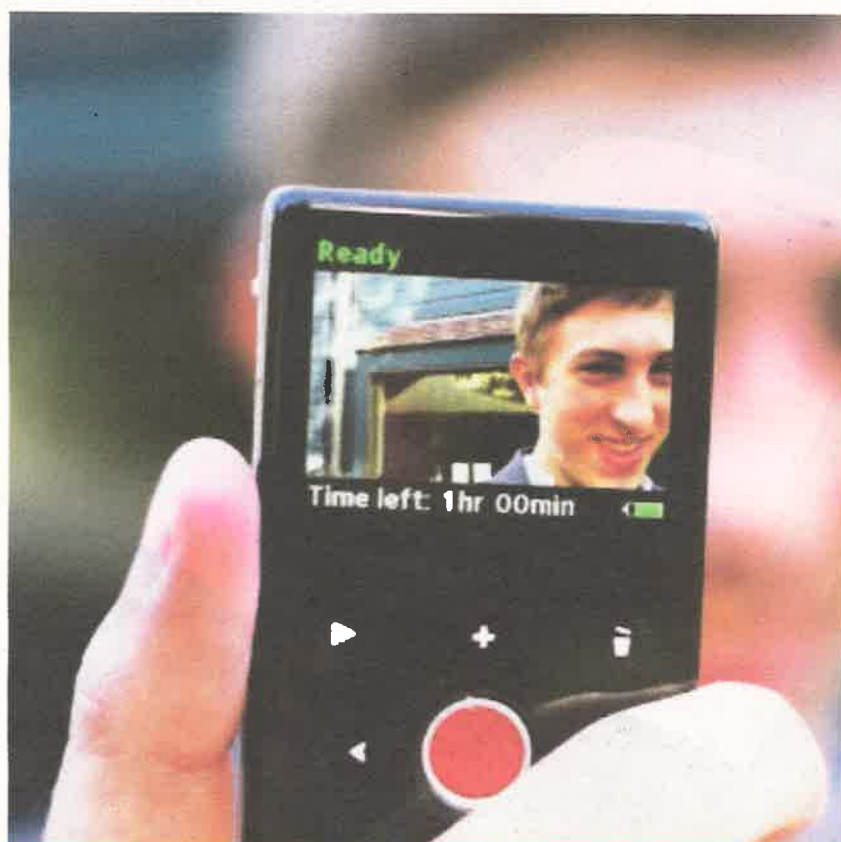
CREATE A YOUTUBE PLAYLIST

Put together a playlist of interesting ads, new technologies, 'need to know' videos etc. and send it round. Collecting them as you go saves time for everyone else (bonus if everyone sits down in a room to watch) and shows you're making an effort to get everyone up to speed.



DOCUMENT THE REAL WORLD

Photograph or film outside your office: where the product or service is sold or experienced, what staff are like (even if it's something about the laces on their trainers), how people interact with it, what surroundings look like, etc. and show everyone your findings and recommendations.



GET TO GRIPS WITH MEDIA

It's 2013. By now you should know how to shoot and edit basic videos, how to take photos and use them in presentations. Companies have the tools lying around, but often nobody really knows how to use them or bothers to learn. Take ownership of them to bring value to meetings and projects.



BUILD A BRAND WALL

Create a wall of visual stimulus and encourage everyone to add their own ideas and notes. The aim is to create a collage that helps people understand what the brand should look and feel like. The wall should ideally be in a place where people can walk past it or in a dedicated 'war room'.

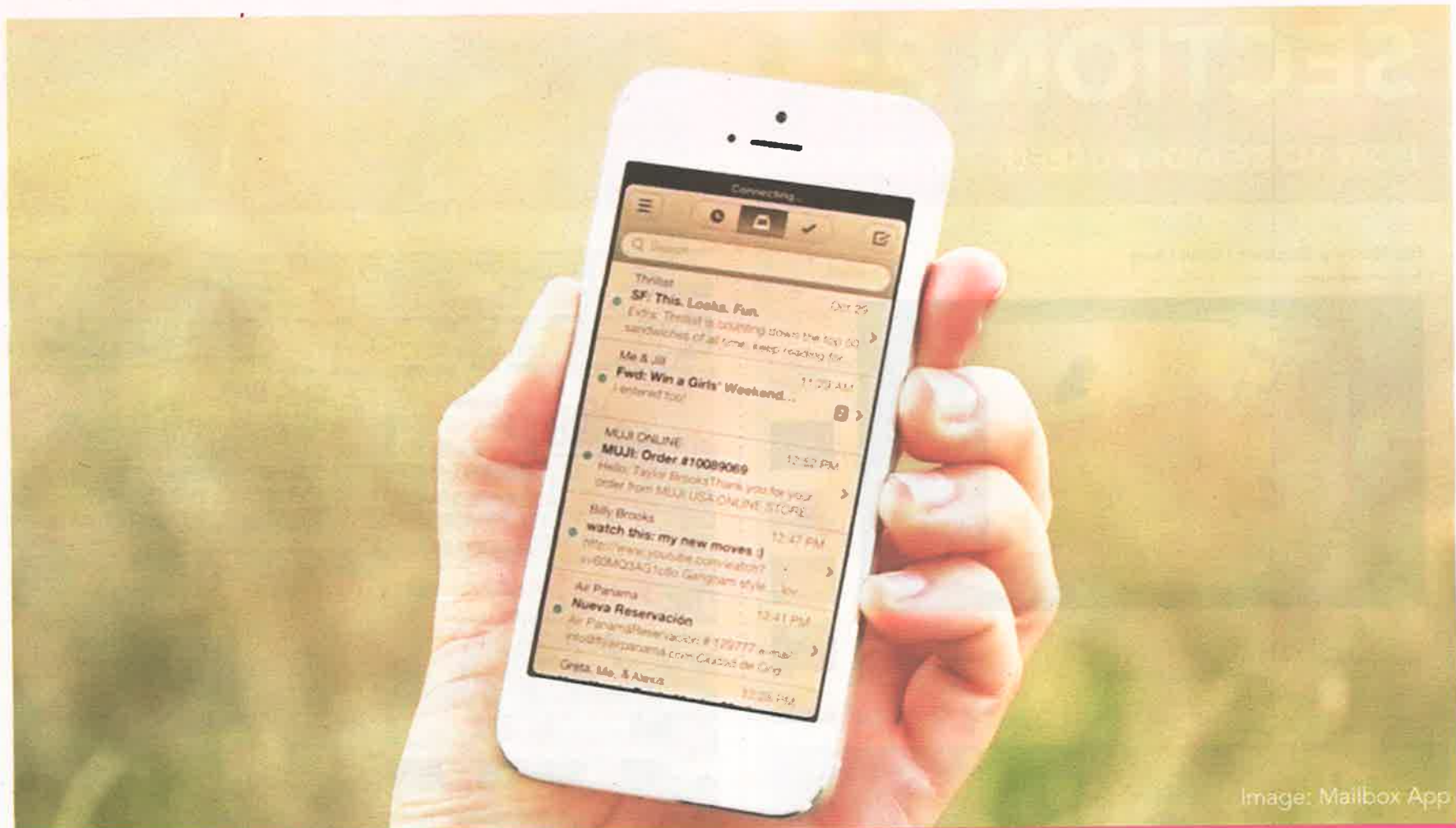
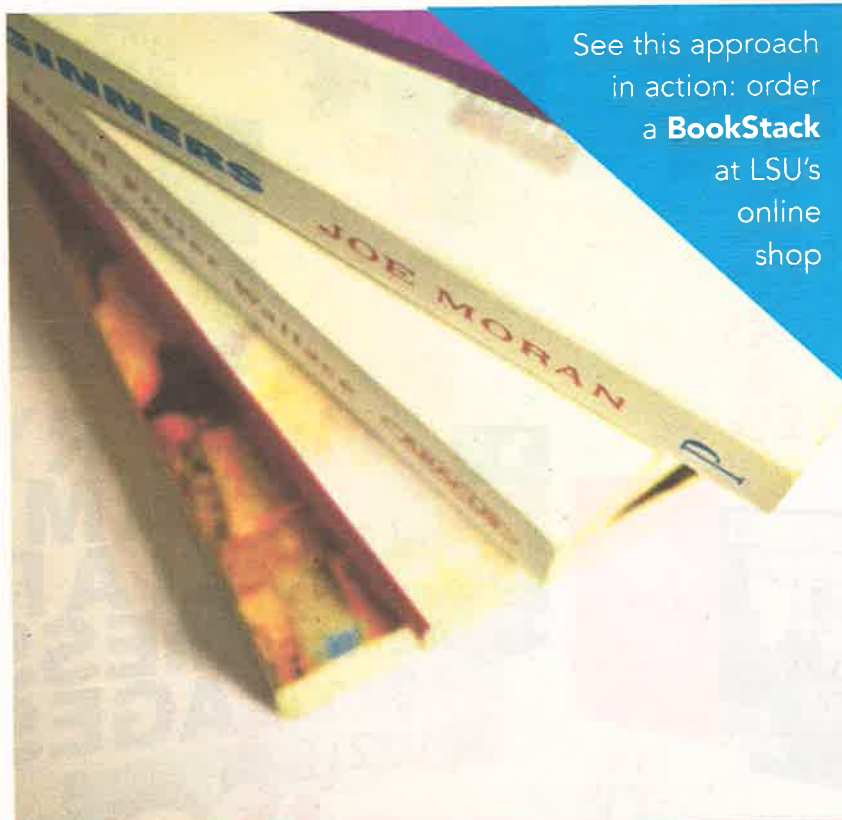


Image: Mailbox App

CUT DOWN ON EMAIL

1. Be concise. You're more likely to get a response. 2. "Action steps" first, not last. 3. Number your questions. 4. Make the way forward clear. 5. Include deadlines. Busy people will thank you. 6. Use "FYI" for emails that have no actionable information. 7. Tell them that you'll get to it later if you can't reply. 8. Use expressive and compelling subject lines. 9. Never send an angry or contentious email. 10. Never "reply all" (unless you absolutely must).

Source: 99u.com



See this approach
in action: order
a **BookStack**
at LSU's
online
shop

SUMMARISE BOOKS

Read books so others don't have to. Create a 1-page summary in bullet points you can do so that everyone can get an idea of: what the book is about, the chapter you really need to read in order to understand the subject, the best quotes from it and what they should do differently.

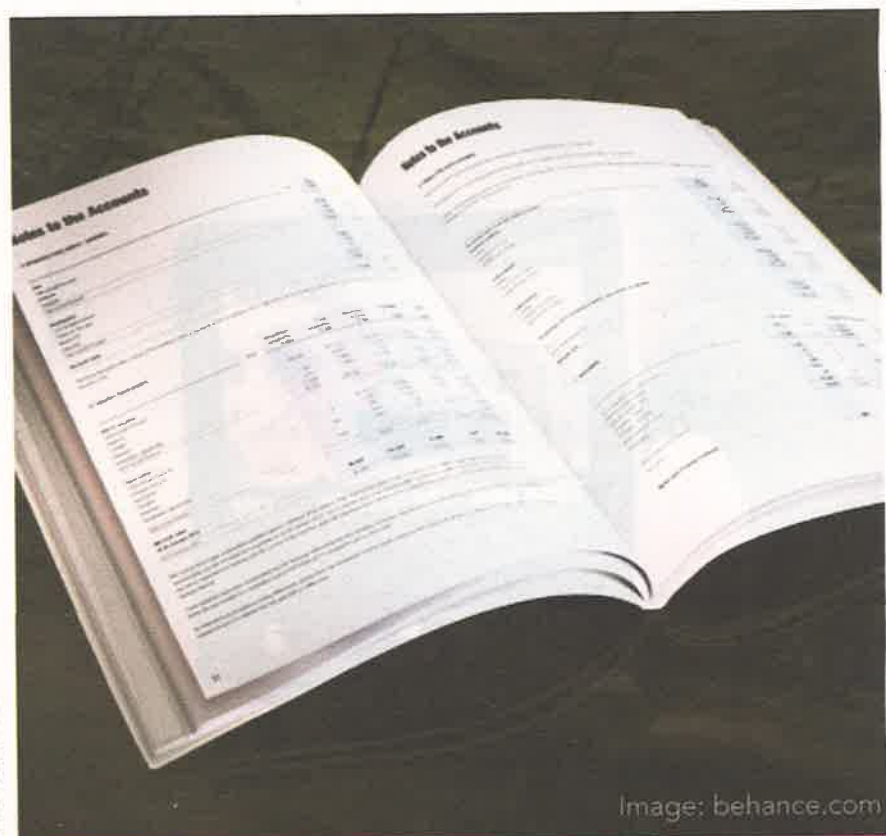
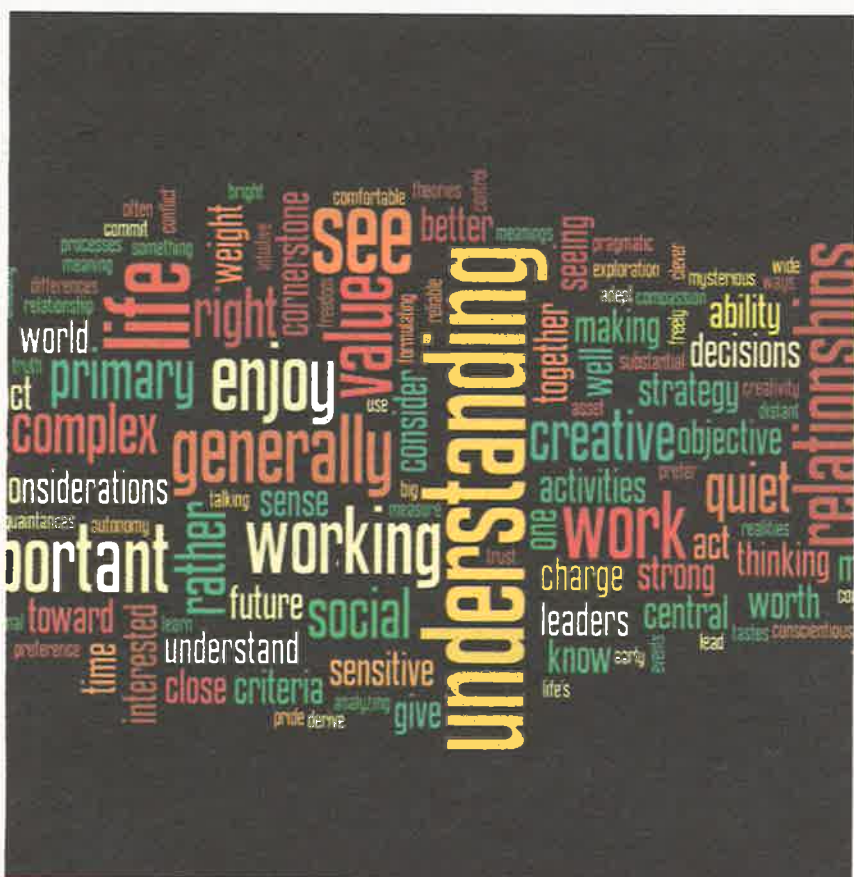


Image: behance.com

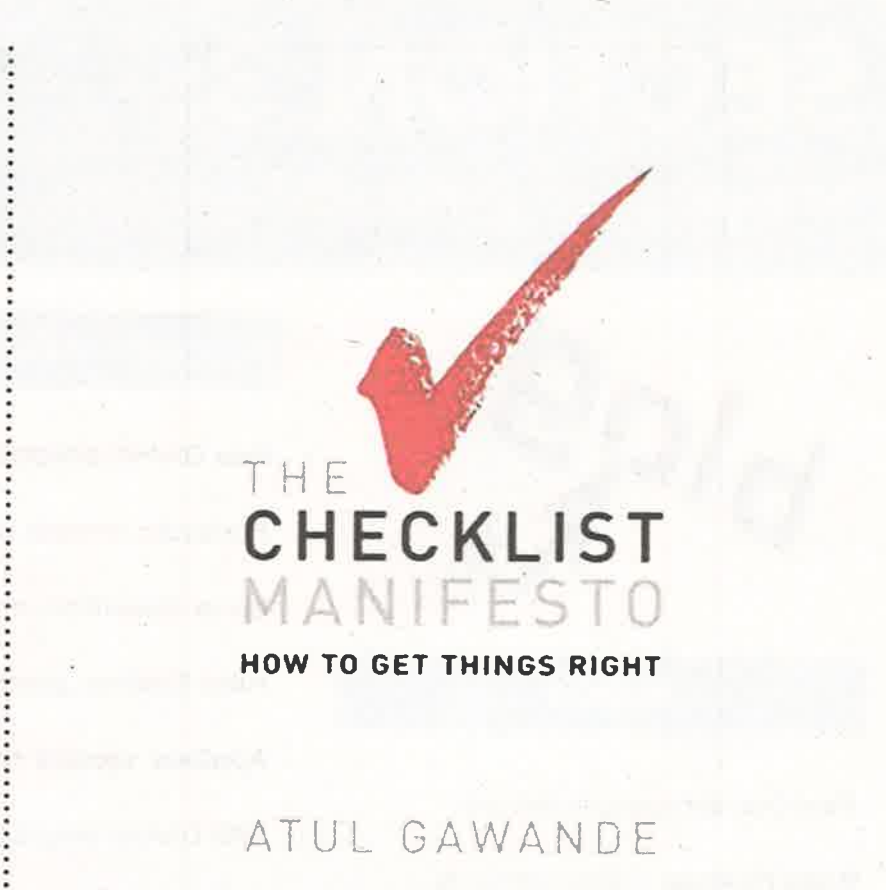
SUMMARISE THE COMPANY REPORT

Do this exercise in order to make sure you fully understand how the company makes money and also where it's losing it. You'll be better placed to know your role in the big picture, how boardroom decisions are made and what departments could and should do to work together better.



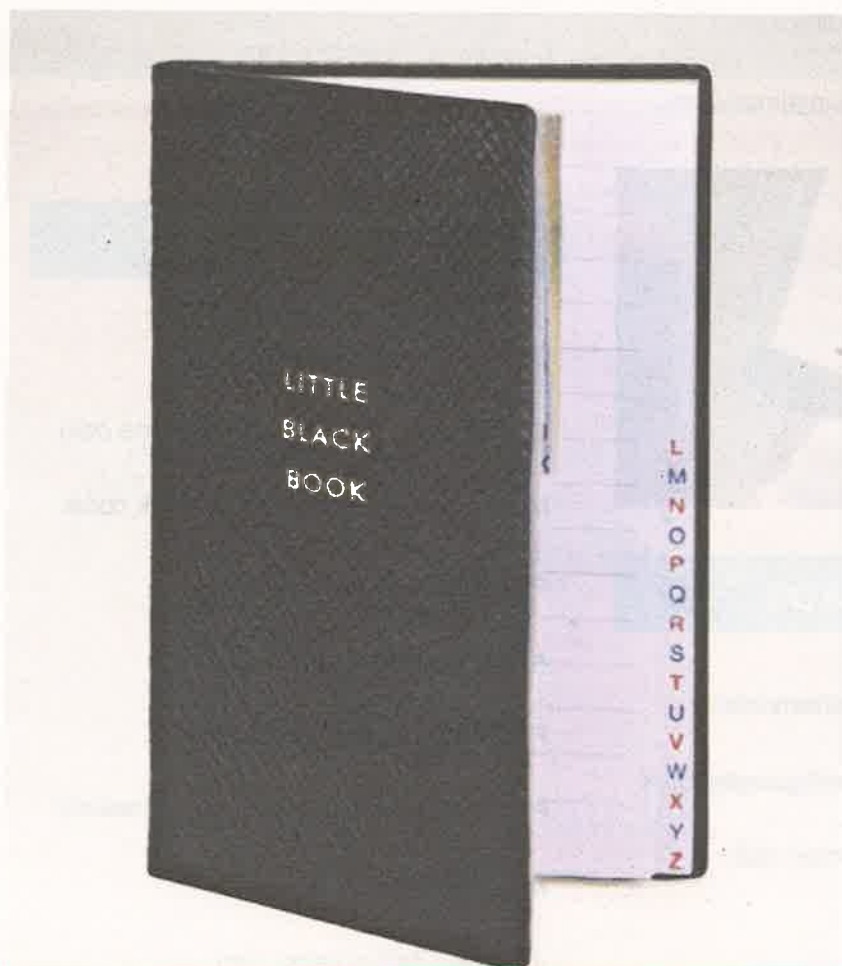
WORDCLOUD THE COMPETITION

Use wordle.net to create wordclouds out of competitor press releases, websites, or articles from industry news sites. The words they use to describe themselves will stand out, letting you know how they think about their role within the category.



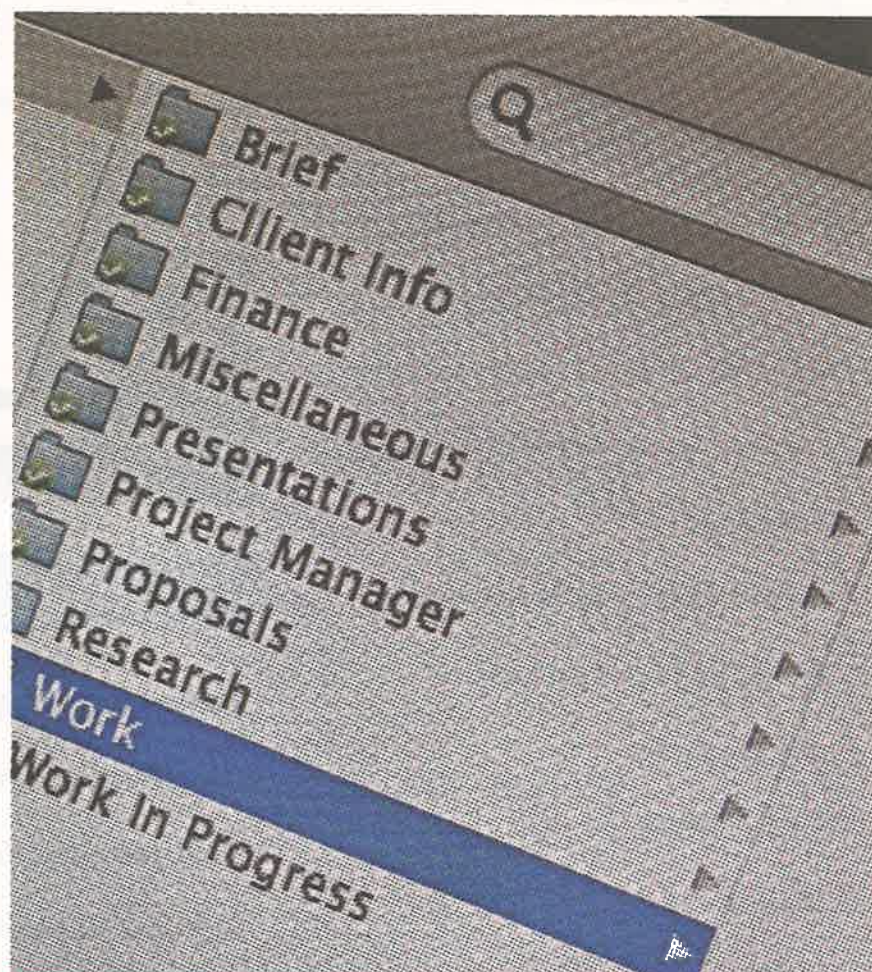
CIRCULATE THE NOTES

Meetings always happen, but no-one ever documents them anymore (unless it's their job specifically). Make notes of what's being said and decided, especially on long projects - having someone bring in the 'perspective police' when everyone else gets derailed can be a life-saver.



KEEP A BLACK BOOK

Get better at networking and keep in touch with people who can provide useful services (or those you've used before and like): hotels, workshop spaces, food catering, couriers, researchers, agencies, photographers, overnight printers. It will be worth its weight in gold sooner rather than later.



FILE THINGS PROPERLY

Most companies have hard drives that somehow become black holes for files. If you are 100% certain that the system could do with a proper naming convention and structure, take the reins as long as everyone knows you're doing it and where to find stuff afterwards. It will always speed things up.

SECTION 3:

INTELLECTUALLY STIMULATING WEBSITES



BLOGS

Paul Graham: paulgraham.com

Brain Pickings: brainpickings.org

Arts&Letters: artsandlettersdaily.com

Mental Floss: mentalfloss.com

Free Net Project: freenetproject.org

Open My Mind (blog): openmymind.net

Bret Victor Projects: worrydream.com

Less Wrong: lesswrong.com

Coding Horror: codinghorror.com

Jason Kottke's blog: kottke.org

McSweeney's: mcsweeneys.net

Daily Dish: dish.andrewsullivan.com

Crooked Timber: crookedtimber.org

Wonkblog:
washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog

Barking up the wrong tree:
bakadesuyo.com

Fortean Times:
forteantimes.com

EDGE: edge.org

David Brooks:
brooks.blogs.nytimes.com

UTNE Reader: utne.com

DATA

Pew Global: pewglobal.org

Forrester: forrester.com

Ipsos: ipsos-mori.com

Hans Rosling: gapminder.org

AppData: appdata.com

TNS Global: tnsglobal.com

Adplanner: google.com/adplanner

UK Data: data.gov

YouGOV: yougov.co.uk

UNdata: data.un.org

Euromonitor: euromonitor.com

Harris Poll: harrispollonline.com

538: fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com



LONGREADS

McKinsey mckinseyquarterly.com

Think Quarterly: thinkwithgoogle.co.uk

Longreads: longreads.com (\$/£)

Lapham's Quarterly:
laphamsquarterly.com

Granta: granta.com

Believer: believermag.com

Canopy: canopycanopycanopy.com



LEARN

Open Culture: openculture.com

Quora: quora.com

TED: ted.com

Khan Academy: khanacademy.org

MIT Open Courseware - ocw.mit.edu

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:
plato.stanford.edu

Coursera: coursera.com

Lynda: lynda.com

ADVERTISING

Campaign: campaignmag.com

Contagious: contagiousmagazine.com

MarketingWeek: marketingweek.co.uk

AdWeek: adweek.com

AdAge: adage.com

POPSOP: popsop.com

PR Newser: mediabistro.com/prnewser

More About Advertising:
moreaboutadvertising.com

Digiday: digiday.com

Branding Strategy Insider
brandingstrategyinsider.com/

The Round Up #1:
Launch edition

The Round Up #2:
Coffee

The Round Up #3:
Videogames

The Round Up #4:
2012 at LSU

The Round Up #5:
Company Culture

The Round Up #6:
Luxury

The Round Up #7:
Identity

The Round Up #8:
Learning

The Round Up #9:
Alcohol

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newsletter** - packed with themed
content from around the globe

Look out for 2-Up, our new course, coming soon!

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