

The Brand Growth Playbook

Bonobo & Co · Autumn 2026 · Free edition

McCain's nine-year bet

How backing the brand protected the price

Double the revenue, same budget

The Cotswold Company's PE brief, and how brand answered it

The 95:5 rule

Why most of your future customers aren't buying yet

Six stages

A growth plan a board can follow and measure



The evidence for brand, and what to do about it.

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“ Read it in order, or go straight to the stage you're stuck on. Each stage follows the same pattern: what the evidence says, what it means commercially, what to do in the first 100 days, the tools that help, and the number to watch.

The portraits in this playbook are illustrations of researchers whose work is cited. They have not endorsed it, and this playbook is not affiliated with them.

Why this, *why now*

For a decade, a lot of growing businesses were told that brand was a luxury. Performance marketing was measurable, so it got the budget. Brand was a feeling, so it got cut.

That view is changing. More and more chief executives and finance directors are talking publicly about brand as an investment, not a cost. The evidence has said so for years. What has changed is that the cost of chasing the same small pool of ready-to-buy customers keeps rising, and boards are noticing.

You can hear it on results calls. In March 2026, Reckitt's chief financial officer, Shannon Eisenhardt, said: "We're investing more behind our brands to fuel our top line growth while also growing our margins."

A month earlier, Haleon's CFO, Dawn Allen, reported: "we increased A&P spend by 7.5% at constant currency to 20.5% of sales." A&P is advertising and promotion.

20.5%

Haleon's advertising and promotion spend as a share of sales, after a 7.5% increase at constant currency

“ *We're investing more behind our brands to fuel our top line growth while also growing our margins.*

SHANNON EISENHARDT, CFO, RECKITT · MARCH 2026

BAIN'S WORKED EXAMPLE

10-12%

EBITDA growth a year, now
needed to make a 2.5x return
over five years

7 years

Where holding periods have
drifted towards

Private equity has its own reason to pay attention. Bain's Global Private Equity Report 2026 says low interest rates and rising multiples powered over half of all buyout returns. That help has faded. In Bain's worked example, a deal now needs something closer to 10-12% EBITDA growth a year to make a 2.5x return over five years, and holding periods have drifted towards seven years. Bain doesn't mention brand. The link is my reading, not theirs: when leverage and multiples do less of the work, returns lean harder on growing revenue and holding price, and that is where brand earns its keep.

This playbook is for businesses that have outgrown their marketing: scale-ups, PE and VC-backed companies, and founder-led firms with real ambition and a real budget. It's for the people who run them and the people who invest in them.

IT DOES THREE THINGS

1

Sets out what the evidence says about how brands grow, in B2B as well as B2C.

2

Shows where brand turns up in the numbers a board cares about: price, margin, cost of acquisition and value at exit.

3

Turns that into a system - six stages, run as a loop, with a number the board can watch at each one.

Read it in order, or go straight to the stage you're stuck on. Each stage follows the same pattern: what the evidence says, what it means commercially, what to do in the first 100 days, the tools that help, and the number to watch.

Everything here is my opinion and recommendation, based on 25 years of building brands and businesses and on the research cited at the end. Where the evidence is thin, I say so.



Anthony Tattum

FOUNDER, BONOBO & CO

The argument *in five points*

1

Most of your future customers aren't buying yet.

At any moment, only a small share of a market is actively looking. Research by Professor John Dawes of the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, for the LinkedIn B2B Institute, suggests a rough B2B rule of thumb: about 5% of buyers are in the market at any one time, and up to 95% are not. The rest will buy later, and when they do, most choose from a list they already have in their head. Bain & Company says around 90% of B2B buyers end up buying from a supplier on their "Day 1 list" - the suppliers they have in mind when they start. If you're not on that list before the search starts, performance spend can't put you there.



5% in market

95% not, yet

2

Brand and activation do different jobs - and they're better together.

Activation converts demand that exists today. It's quick, measurable and fades when the spend stops. Brand builds the demand of the next year or two. It's slower, harder to see and it compounds. Each makes the other work harder. The question isn't which one; it's the balance.

3

Being known changes the commercial maths.

Familiar brands tend to win more often, discount less and sell faster. In investor terms that means a lower cost of acquisition, firmer pricing and a shorter sales cycle. The biggest pay-off from brand is often pricing power, and it takes longer than a quarter to show.

4

Recognition is an asset, and it's easy to waste.

The things people use to recognise you - a colour, a name, a shape, a phrase - make every pound of media work harder when they're used consistently. They're often changed for the wrong reasons: new management, a fresh agency, boredom inside the building.

5

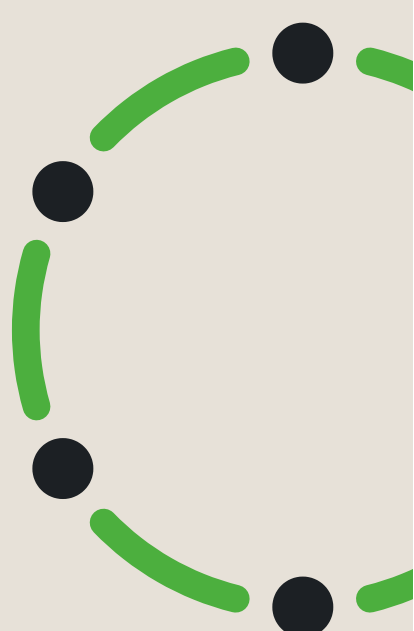
AI raises the stakes.

Producing marketing is getting cheaper by the month. Being remembered and chosen still takes time, consistency and judgement. And as more buyers ask AI assistants for a shortlist, a brand that is clearly defined, consistently described and widely mentioned has an edge.



The six-stage system later in this playbook turns these five points into a plan a board can follow and measure.

Follow *the* money



Boards fund what they can see in the numbers. The case for brand is strongest when it shows up in revenue, margin and price, and the best evidence comes from businesses that kept going for years, not quarters.

Most of the cases below are IPA Effectiveness Awards entries: the figures are reported by the entrants and checked by judges, not independently audited.

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THE COTSWOLD COMPANY

Private equity's *brief*

£2.69

short-term profit for every £1 invested

The Cotswold Company, the furniture retailer, has been backed by True Capital since 2016.

According to a 2021 IPA blog post, its private equity investors set a hard brief: double revenue from £50m to £100m in five years, with no increase in marketing budget. The business answered with brand-led TV. The work won Bronze at the IPA Effectiveness Awards 2020, and the entry reported a short-term profit of £2.69 for every £1 invested.

It has kept growing since. Revenue went from £42m in 2018 to £123m in the year to February 2026, with pre-tax profit of £9.6m. Brand wasn't the only driver - new showrooms and Covid-era demand for the home helped - but the brief will be familiar to plenty of investor-backed boards.

REVENUE, £M

£42m

2018

£123m

Pre-tax profit £9.6m

Year to February 2026

THE BRIEF

Double revenue from £50m to £100m in five years, with no increase in marketing budget.

MCCAIN

-47%

price sensitivity

By 2015, supermarket own label made up half of all frozen chips sold in the UK. McCain had a choice: compete on price, or back the brand. It backed the brand. Over nine years it rebuilt it, following Binet and Field's 60:40 split between brand and activation. The campaign won the IPA Effectiveness Grand Prix in 2024.

Writing on the IPA blog, the media agency the7stars put the effect on price at roughly five times the effect on volume. In other words, the brand's biggest job was protecting what McCain could charge.

THE RESULTS REPORTED IN THE IPA ENTRY

Sales value	+56%
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Average price paid, per kg	+48%
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Price sensitivity	-47%
-------------------	------

£79m of extra gross profit from brand advertising, and net profit up £26m

Profit return per £1	£1.48
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ALSO: CURRYS

£500m

Currys won the IPA Effectiveness Grand Prix in 2026. According to the IPA, its award entry reports £500m of incremental revenue over two years and a 44% increase in long-term return on investment.

Gousto

Both sides

Gousto, the recipe box company, shows both sides.

WHAT BRAND BUILT

80% → 82%

Sign-ups via performance in 2018, then organic and referral by late 2021

In 2018, about 80% of its sign-ups came through performance marketing. It shifted spend into brand, and by late 2021 the company said about 82% came organically and through referral. Those are its own figures, and referral is encouraged with discounts, so it isn't free. The work won Bronze at the IPA Effectiveness Awards 2026.

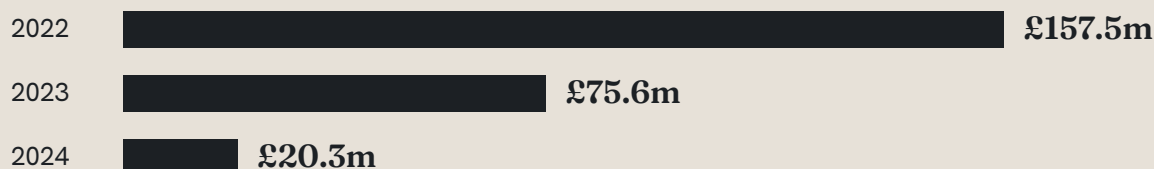
THEN THE HARD PART

-80%

Fall in valuation, in just over a year

In 2023 Gousto cut 14% of its workforce, and its valuation fell by about 80% in just over a year. Pre-tax losses were £157.5m in 2022, £75.6m in 2023 and £20.3m in 2024. For FY2025, the chief executive's shareholder letter reports record revenue of £342m and adjusted EBITDA of £45m - self-reported, and adjusted rather than statutory.

PRE-TAX LOSSES, £M



THE LESSON

Brand built scale and market leadership. It didn't protect the business from over-expanding.

58%

of advertising's profit arrived after the first 13 weeks - which is often where reporting stops looking.



Thinkbox and Ebiquity's Profit Ability 2 study (2024) looked at £1.8bn of UK media spend across 141 brands, from 2021 to 2023. The average short-term profit return was £1.87 for every £1. Counting the longer-term effect too, it rose to £4.11.

£1.87

Short-term profit per
£1

£4.11

Counting the longer-term
effect

And in *B2B*

Les Binet and Peter Field's study for LinkedIn's B2B Institute was the first B2B cut of the IPA's effectiveness data. The sample is small - under 50 cases - so they describe the findings as tentative. But the pattern is a familiar one:

Share of voice works.

In B2B, 10 points of share of voice above share of market was linked to about 0.7 points of share growth a year, against 0.6 for consumer brands.

Reach beats loyalty.

Campaigns aimed mainly at loyalty among existing customers had a zero success rate on very large business effects. Campaigns reaching the whole category produced the most.

Brand lifts sales activity.

B2B campaigns with brand effects were far more likely to report very large short-term sales effects.

Feeling beats features over time.

Emotional campaigns produced several times more very large long-term effects than rational ones.

VW COMMERCIAL
VEHICLES

11:1

Payback

BT BUSINESS

-17%

Cost per acquisition

BT ENTERPRISE

£6.32

Short-term margin return per
£1

Two B2B cases from the same report make it concrete. Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, talking to small business owners about partnership rather than payload, grew awareness by 30%, reached its highest UK sales and share in 60 years, and paid back 11 to 1. BT Business cut its cost per acquisition by 17% and reported a profit return of 316%. A later IPA case, BT Enterprise's 2022 campaign to small and medium businesses, reported a short-term margin return of £6.32 per £1.

A FAIR WARNING These are larger businesses with larger budgets than most scale-ups. The scale doesn't transfer. The principles do.

Brand and activation

different jobs, better together



Mark Ritson - marketing professor and columnist, who calls it "bothism"

Most marketing arguments in growing businesses end up as brand versus performance. It's the wrong argument. The two do different jobs, on different timescales, and each makes the other work harder. Mark Ritson calls holding both at once "bothism". It's a good word for a simple idea.

	 Activation	 Brand
JOB	Convert demand that exists now	Build demand for later
WHO IT TALKS TO	The few who are ready to buy	Everyone who might buy one day
HOW IT WORKS	Information, offers, a reason to act today	Memory, feeling, being easy to think of
TIMESCALE	Days and weeks	Months and years
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STOP	Sales fall away quickly	The effect decays slowly
WHAT IT DOES TO PRICE	Often relies on discounts	Tends to reduce price sensitivity

EFFECT OVER TIME
(ILLUSTRATIVE, NOT TO SCALE)



They multiply rather than add. Activation converts better when the buyer already knows and trusts you. Brand pays back faster when there's an easy way to act. LinkedIn says audiences who see both brand and acquisition messages on its platform are six times more likely to convert - its own figure, without a published method.

Getting the balance *roughly right*



Les Binet - with Peter Field, the IPA research behind the 60:40 rule of thumb

CONSUMER BRANDS

Brand : activation

60%

40%

B2B

Brand : activation, roughly

46%

54%

■ Brand □ Activation

Binet and Field's work points to around 60% brand and 40% activation for consumer brands, and roughly 46% brand to 54% activation in B2B. They're clear that these are starting points, not rules - the right mix varies with category, price, size and stage.

In my experience, most growing businesses are a long way short of either. They spend almost everything on activation because it's easier to measure, then wonder why costs per lead keep rising. The answer is rarely to flip the budget overnight. It's to start shifting, protect the brand money from the quarterly squeeze, and measure it properly.

“*McCain didn't switch off activation. It rebalanced, and held its nerve for long enough to see the result.*”

What it means *for your business*

The evidence is the same whoever owns the business. What changes is the number that matters most to the people round the table.

PE-backed

VALUE CREATION AND EXIT

You're working to a value creation plan and an exit. Brand earns its place by protecting margin and pricing power, which protects EBITDA. A known, well-defined brand is also an asset a buyer pays for, and one that makes the equity story easier to tell. The risk to manage is short-termism: brand budgets are often the first cut when a quarter looks tight, and the cost of that cut shows up later, on someone else's watch or in the exit multiple.

Pricing and ownership: over the page

VC-backed

EFFICIENT GROWTH, NEXT ROUND

You're judged on efficient growth and the next round. Performance channels feel efficient early, but costs tend to rise as you exhaust the buyers who are ready now. Brand widens the pool of people who'll consider you, so blended cost of acquisition can come down over time rather than creeping up.

Founder-led

BEYOND ONE PERSON

Growth often depends on the founder's network and energy - which is a great start and a fragile engine. Brand builds a pipeline that doesn't rely on one person chasing. More inbound from people who already know you, fewer deals won on price, and a business that is worth more to a buyer because it isn't all in the founder's head.

NUMBERS TO WATCH

Price realisation, gross margin, share of search against competitors.

NUMBERS TO WATCH

Blended customer acquisition cost, CAC payback, growth in branded search.

NUMBERS TO WATCH

Share of pipeline that's inbound, win rate, average deal value.

MCKINSEY ON PRIVATE EQUITY

3-7%

added to margin within a year by pricing programmes in portfolio companies

Pricing is where brand and the value creation plan meet.

McKinsey's work on private equity finds pricing programmes in portfolio companies add 3-7% to margin within a year, and the EBITDA multiple amplifies that gain at exit. Brand supports pricing power - McCain is the clearest example above.

My view, not a measured result: growth and minority investors, whose returns depend on revenue growth rather than leverage, are structurally better placed to fund brand. To be fair to buyout owners, the research is mixed.

THE RESEARCH IS MIXED

Journal of Corporate Finance, 2012

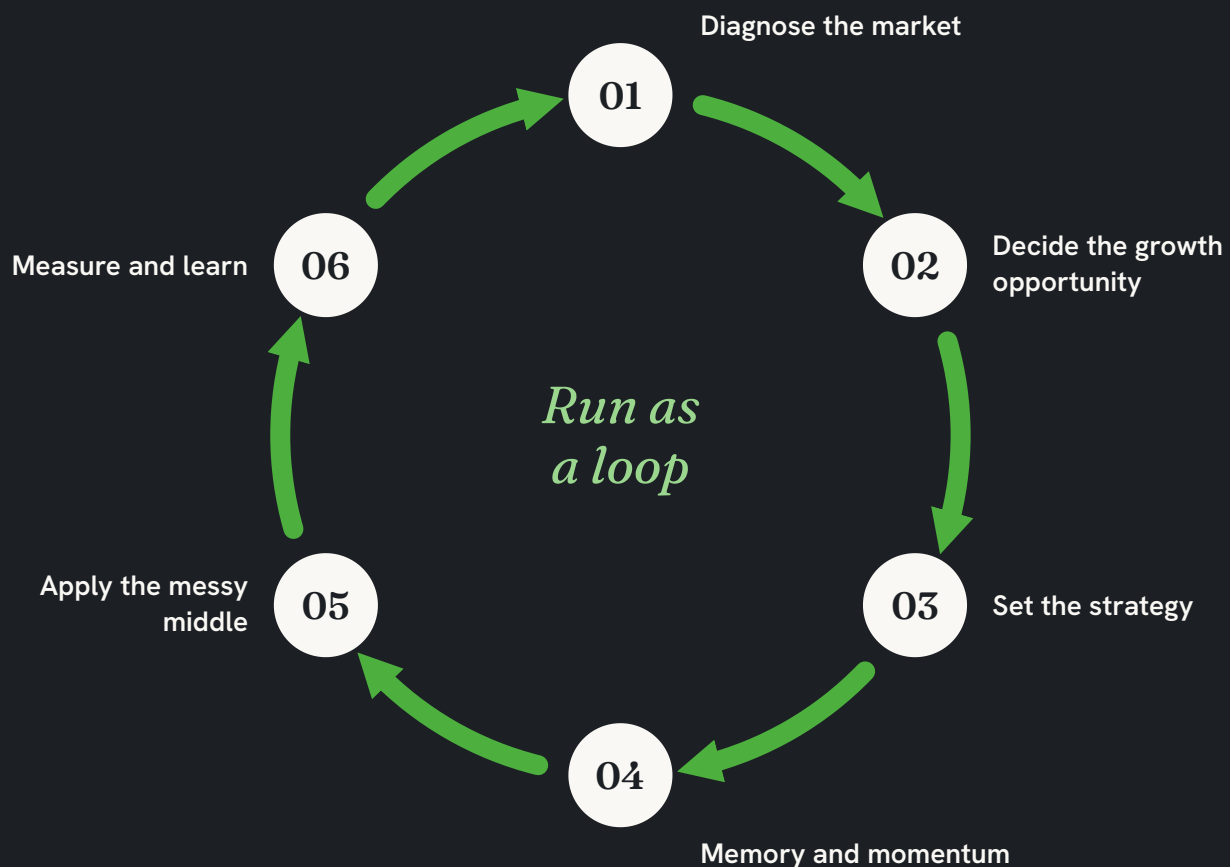
A 2012 study in the Journal of Corporate Finance found new owners, especially in private equity deals, are more likely to cut advertising sharply in the brands they acquire - though those brands don't, on average, lose significant market share.

NUMBERS TO WATCH

Price realisation, gross margin, share of search against competitors.

The six *stages*

Evidence is only useful if it changes what you do on Monday. The system I use with clients, Vector, turns it into six stages, taken in order and run as a loop.



The order matters. Most growing businesses jump straight to stage four - new campaigns, new website, new agency - without agreeing who they're trying to win and why. The six stages stop that shortcut.

The structure doesn't change with the size of the business. The depth does. A business with a narrow, obvious opportunity might settle stages one and two in a couple of conversations. A larger or more complex one needs weeks. Either way, the same questions get answered, in the same order.

EACH STAGE BELOW FOLLOWS THE SAME PATTERN

The evidence - what the research says

What it means commercially - in the language of a board

The first 100 days - what to actually do

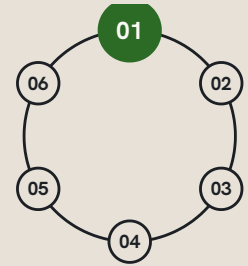
Tools - including where AI helps. AI supports; people decide.

The number to watch - one or two measures the board can track

01

3x

Brands in a buyer's first shortlist can be up to three times more likely to be bought



Diagnose the market

Before deciding what to do, find out where you really stand - with the people who buy, not just the ones who already have.

THE EVIDENCE

Most of a market isn't buying at any given moment, and when people do start looking, most have already formed a shortlist. Brands in a buyer's first shortlist can be up to three times more likely to be bought, according to McKinsey's research (2009). Buying usually starts with a situation, not a search term: a growth push, a problem that won't go away, a supplier who's let them down, a new boss. Researchers call these category entry points. The brands that come to mind in those moments tend to win.

WHAT IT MEANS COMMERCIALY

You may be losing deals you never knew existed, because you weren't on the list when they started. Most businesses know their win rate. Far fewer know how often they're considered at all.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

- 1 Talk to recent customers, lost prospects and people who never considered you. Ask what was happening when they started looking.
- 2 Set a baseline: awareness and consideration against your three closest competitors.
- 3 Look at share of search - how often people search for you compared with competitors.
- 4 Ask the main AI assistants who they'd recommend in your category, and note how they describe you.
- 5 Pull the sales data you already have: win rate, discounting, sales cycle length, where pipeline comes from.

TOOLS

Survey and brand-tracking tools, search data, review and social listening. AI is useful for sorting interview transcripts and reviews into themes quickly. Deciding what those themes mean is a human job.

THE NUMBER TO WATCH

Awareness and consideration against your top three competitors. Share of search as a quicker, cheaper signal in between.

02

66%

Of a brand's growth potential sits with non-buyers, and 25% with light buyers



Byron Sharp - Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, author of *How Brands Grow*

Decide the growth opportunity

Pick where growth will come from, put a number on it and agree it in writing.

THE EVIDENCE

Decades of research from the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute show that brands grow mainly by winning more buyers, and that loyalty tends to rise as a side effect of size rather than drive it. A 2023 study by Trinh, Dawes and Sharp, using a UK household panel, found most of a brand's growth potential sits with non-buyers and light buyers - 66% and 25% respectively. Binet and Field found the same pattern in B2B: campaigns aimed at the whole category outperformed campaigns aimed at existing customers.

WHAT IT MEANS COMMERCIALLY

Growth comes mostly from new buyers, not from squeezing more out of the ones you have. Keeping customers matters, but it is rarely the main engine. That changes where budget and attention should go.

Non-buyers 66%

Light 25%

Share of growth potential, UK household panel (Trinh, Dawes and Sharp, 2023)

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

- 1 Choose the buying situations and segments you most want to win, from what stage one found.
- 2 Size each one: how many buyers, how often they buy, what they're worth.
- 3 Agree the single biggest growth opportunity with the board, in a page.
- 4 Write down what you're choosing not to do. It's often the more useful half.

TOOLS

Market sizing and simple scenario models. AI can build and stress-test scenarios quickly; the assumptions still need someone who knows the market.



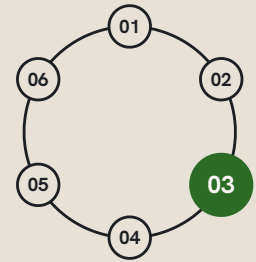
THE NUMBER TO WATCH

Number of new customers, or penetration of the target market. Share of new business coming from the situations you chose.

03

Nearly 3x

B2B campaigns built on a clear customer promise were nearly three times more likely to report market share gains



Set the strategy

Decide how you'll win: the position, the promise, the balance of brand and activation, and how success will be judged.

THE EVIDENCE

Brand and activation work on different timescales and multiply each other. Brands whose share of voice is above their share of market tend to grow; below it, they tend to shrink. WARC research with the B2B Institute at LinkedIn (2024), Making a Promise to the Business Customer, found B2B campaigns built on a clear customer promise were nearly three times more likely to report market share gains. Lower-budget promise campaigns did particularly well, and the report says promises suit scale-ups and firms with limited resources.

WHAT IT MEANS COMMERCIALLY

The budget split is a growth decision, not a marketing preference. Setting share of voice against a market share target gives the board a rational way to decide how much to spend, rather than starting from last year's number.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

- 1 Agree the positioning and one clear promise to the customer.
- 2 Set the split between brand and activation, and an always-on plan for both.
- 3 Set a share of voice target against your share of market ambition.
- 4 Agree in writing how each will be judged - brand on brand measures, activation on sales measures - before anything launches.
- 5 Agree how long the brand budget is protected before anyone judges it.

TOOLS

Budget and scenario models, a simple share of voice calculator, competitor spend estimates.

 THE NUMBER TO WATCH

Actual spend split against plan.
Share of voice against share of market.

04

55% vs 24%

Marketers who said they change brand assets because of organisational change, against those who said they base changes on quantitative data (2014 study)



Jenni Romaniuk - Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, author of *Building Distinctive Brand Assets*

Memory and momentum

This is where the brand gets built in people's heads, and where activation keeps the pipeline moving.

THE EVIDENCE

People buy what comes to mind easily. Distinctive assets - the colours, shapes, names, characters and phrases people link to you - are how you get remembered and recognised, as Jenni Romaniuk's work at Ehrenberg-Bass shows. In the B2B data, campaigns aiming for fame produced, on the report's own chart, roughly three times the very large business effects of campaigns with sales activation goals, and emotional campaigns comfortably outperformed rational ones over time. Rational messages still have a job: they work best close to the sale.

WHAT IT MEANS COMMERCIALY

Consistency compounds and resets waste money. Every time a business changes its look or its line, it starts building memory again from scratch. A 2014 study by Decode Marketing and the brandgym found 55% of marketers said they change brand assets because of organisational change, often a new marketing director. Only 24% said they base those changes on quantitative data. New leaders, fresh agencies and internal boredom are expensive.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

- 1 Audit your distinctive assets: which ones do buyers actually recognise and link to you?
- 2 Write the brand code: your brand guidelines, evolved into a single, machine-readable source of truth that the business, its agencies and its AI tools all work from.
- 3 Brief creative around the buying situations from stage one, not around job titles.
- 4 Start always-on brand activity alongside activation, rather than one after the other.

TOOLS

The brand code is the most important tool here. It keeps people, agencies and AI tools consistent, so speed doesn't cost you recognition. Creative testing tools can help predict which work will be noticed and remembered before you spend on media.

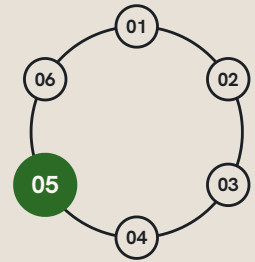
THE NUMBER TO WATCH

How many people correctly link your key assets to you. Creative quality scores before launch.

05

6

Shortcuts that tend to tip the choice,
from Google's research with Ipsos



Apply the messy middle

Between first interest and final decision, buyers wander. This stage makes sure they don't wander off.

THE EVIDENCE

Google's research with Ipsos, Decoding Decisions, found that buyers loop between exploring and evaluating rather than moving neatly down a funnel. Six shortcuts tend to tip the choice: category heuristics (the few facts people use to compare), the power of now, social proof, scarcity, authority and the power of free. In B2B there's a buying group, not a single buyer, and reputation and proof carry a lot of weight with all of them.

Category heuristics

The power of now

Social proof

Scarcity

Authority

The power of free

WHAT IT MEANS COMMERCIALLY

Friction at the point of choice costs revenue you've already paid to create. A confusing website, a slow proposal or a missing case study can undo months of brand work. This is often the quickest money in the whole system.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

- 1 Walk the journey as a buyer would: search, website, enquiry, first call, proposal, contract.
- 2 Fix the biggest points of friction first.
- 3 Add proof where decisions get made: case studies, reviews, credentials, named clients where you can.
- 4 Use behavioural shortcuts honestly - real deadlines, real scarcity, real social proof.
- 5 Give sales the material buying groups need to make the case internally.

TOOLS

Analytics, session recordings and simple A/B testing. AI can audit pages, forms and proposals for friction quickly. A connected CRM shows where deals stall.



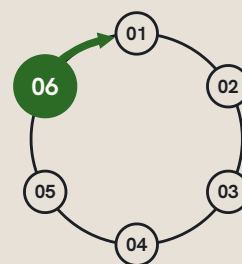
THE NUMBER TO WATCH

Conversion rate at each step, win rate and sales cycle length.

06

4%

Of around 4,000 marketers measured return over six months or longer (LinkedIn, 2019)



Measure and learn

Join marketing to the numbers the board already runs the business on - and feed what you learn back into stage one.

THE EVIDENCE

Most of brand's effect arrives after the window most businesses measure. In Profit Ability 2, 58% of advertising's profit came after the first 13 weeks. In a 2019 LinkedIn survey of around 4,000 B2B and B2C marketers, only 4% measured return over six months or longer. And much of the payback through price is missed by standard measurement, because it builds slowly.

WHAT IT MEANS COMMERCIALY

Judge brand on short-term numbers and you'll undervalue it every time, cut it, and wonder later why costs have risen. Boards need one view that joins brand to revenue, with the right measure on the right timescale.

THE THREE-LAYER DASHBOARD

Media and platform results

Website behaviour

CRM pipeline and revenue

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

- 1 Build a three-layer dashboard: media and platform results, website behaviour, and CRM pipeline and revenue.
- 2 Keep brand and activation measures separate, each judged on its own timescale.
- 3 Track brand health regularly - quarterly or twice a year, depending on budget.
- 4 Hold a quarterly review that asks what worked, what didn't and what changes - and feeds the answers into stage one.
- 5 Once there's enough history, consider marketing mix modelling to show what drives sales over the longer term.

TOOLS

Analytics, CRM and a reporting layer joined up; brand tracking; marketing mix modelling when the data allows. AI helps spot patterns and draft the commentary. The judgement on what to change stays with the people accountable for it.



THE NUMBER TO WATCH

Customer acquisition cost, pipeline value, price realisation and brand health over time.

The AI-connected *stack*



AI is changing how marketing gets made and measured. It makes research, analysis and production faster and cheaper. It doesn't make the decisions any easier, and it doesn't replace knowing a market. The principle I work to: AI supports, people decide.

The stack doesn't need to be exotic. Most growing businesses already own most of it. The value comes from joining it up, and from giving every tool the same source of truth.

STAGE	WHAT THE TOOLS DO	WHERE PEOPLE STAY IN CHARGE
01 Diagnose	Sort reviews, interviews and social conversation into themes; track share of search; check how AI assistants describe you	Deciding what the findings mean
02 Decide	Build market sizes and scenarios quickly	Choosing which opportunity to back
03 Strategy	Model budgets and share of voice	Setting the position, the promise and the split
04 Memory	Produce and adapt content at speed, from the brand code	Judging whether work is distinctive and true to the brand
05 Messy middle	Audit pages, forms and proposals for friction; run tests	Deciding what to change and what to leave alone
06 Measure	Join analytics, CRM and reporting; spot patterns; draft commentary	Deciding what the board needs to know and what changes

UNDERNEATH IT ALL

The brand code

The brand code sits underneath all of it. When the people, agencies and tools in a business all work from one clear, machine-readable definition of the brand - who it's for, what it promises, how it looks and sounds - speed stops costing you consistency. It also gives AI assistants a better chance of describing you accurately when buyers ask them for a shortlist.

100 The first 100 days

You don't need to do everything at once. You do need to do it in order.

Days 1-30

STAGES 01 AND 02

Customer and lost-deal conversations, brand health baseline, share of search, sales data review, growth opportunity agreed

THE BOARD GETS

A one-page diagnosis and the growth opportunity, in writing

Days 31-60

STAGES 03 AND 04

Positioning and promise, brand and activation split, share of voice target, distinctive asset audit, brand code

THE BOARD GETS

A strategy and budget the board can sign off

Days 61-100

STAGES 04, 05 AND 06

Always-on brand activity running, biggest friction fixed, dashboard live, first quarterly review booked

THE BOARD GETS

A dashboard that joins brand to revenue, and the first results

THREE THINGS TEND TO DECIDE WHETHER IT WORKS

Agree the measures before you start.

Brand judged on brand measures, activation on sales measures, each on its own timescale.

Protect the brand budget for long enough to see it work.

Agree the period up front, so a tight quarter doesn't undo it.

Keep the loop turning.

The quarterly review is where the system earns its keep. What you learn goes straight back into the diagnosis.



Anthony *Tattum*



I'm Anthony Tattum. I run Bonobo & Co, a growth consultancy in Birmingham. I work with founder-led and investor-backed businesses whose growth has outrun their marketing - part-time as a fractional CMO, or on one-off projects.

I've spent 25 years building brands and businesses:

Co-founded the agency Big Cat in 2000 and later served as Chief Marketing Officer at Leopard Co

Launched a **£150m** city-centre destination, **95% let** by opening day

Developed the CATERS behavioural framework with Richard Shotton, and ran a five-year research collaboration with the University of Birmingham

Ten years alongside a multi-brand restaurant group as it grew from **£8m to £49m** turnover

Sales & Marketing Leader of the Year 2026, BusinessDesk Leadership Awards

Former IPA Midlands City Head

If you'd like to know where your business stands against the six stages, the usual starting point is a fixed-fee review: what's working, what isn't, and what to do first, in a form a board can act on.

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Growth needs
momentum *and*
direction.



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