



THE MARK OF TRUE TRANSFORMATION

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Key questions to help you leverage a unified brand that reaches strategic goals.

Setting a Clear Path Forward

Most of us would consider ourselves visionary leaders with ambitious goals to grow our firms, positively impact the communities we serve and leave a mark on this industry. That's why we're part of the DI community – contemplating, discussing and planning for the ever-evolving future of the built environment.

So, why is it such an impossible feat to get your team on the same page about the impact you're trying to make – let alone the market – to understand why it matters?

We've all experienced the "It's lonely at the top" sentiment at some point in our careers. You, or a select few, may feel like the only ones who can clearly see where your firm is heading and what's needed to get there. Creating a defined, documented and shared vision and strategic plan is the first step in garnering buy-in, but ...

Does a plan alone do enough to motivate everyone to play an active part in transformation?

An equally important yet overlooked tool firms should leverage is brand strategy – that is, curating and living out a brand that intentionally aligns with your strategic goals. Despite research showing it can

increase revenue by up to 20%,¹ it is often seen as a *nicety* rather than a *necessity*. Many firms' marketing and business-development initiatives are based on short-term responses to immediate opportunities and industry trends rather than letting the brand lead how they show up in the market. Unfortunately, this approach only creates reactive, inconsistent outputs – making it difficult for people to understand who you are and what you stand for.

The good news is we can course-correct if we shift our perspective on the impact of branding.

Understanding Brand

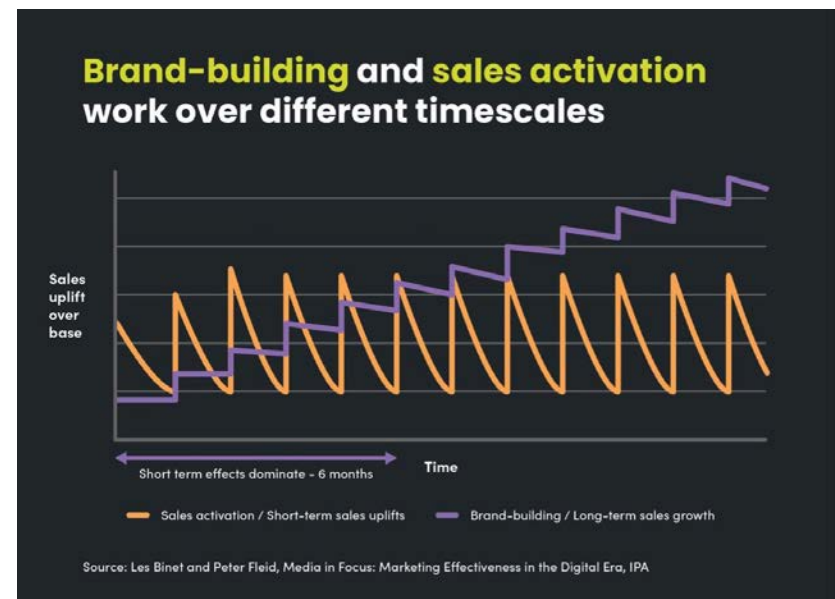
Brand is much more than the logo, color palette or fonts you use on a proposal or website. It is the identity, personality and story of your company that makes it different from competitors that sell similar products or services. In other words, it's the *perception* of who you are, what you stand for, and the unique value you provide internally (to your talent) and externally (to your clients). A well-articulated brand is the rallying cry that makes people want to work with and for you, as well as the guide that helps you determine if those people are a good fit. Here are five reasons you should take a more proactive approach to your brand identity going into the next year:

1. According to a 2023 Netline Report, B2B marketing content consumption has increased by 54% since 2019.² With competitors offering equally compelling portfolios and similar fees, consistently showcasing your unique value is the only way to capture loyal audiences and win new clients.
2. More than 70% of Gen Z say a company having a “mission and values that align with their own” is at least “very important.”³ Emerging top talent seek firms with identity – and will opt for a company that looks, feels and acts like them.
3. 42% of companies told Forbes that a lack of buy-in contributed to their change failure.⁴ Your team needs a unifier to boost morale and collaboration through company shifts.
4. If your firm's future involves mergers or acquisitions, a brand valuation is a critical part of the process. A solid brand identity will boost your value and market appeal, giving you a huge leg up at the negotiation table.

5. 100% of the firms for which my team has completed a **brand perception study** have shown a significant discrepancy in how they view themselves versus how their clients, employees and collaborators perceive them. If your perception isn't built *by* you, it will be built *for* you.

So, if branding is this important, why isn't everyone focused on it?

The built environment industry has traditionally avoided many effective marketing practices (including branding) due to **historical stigmas**. As an additional challenge, brand development is a long-term investment that's harder to measure. While business development and responsive marketing tactics may yield short-term gains, they do not contribute to expanding your market reach.⁵ This is visualized below in the notable study “The Long and Short of It” by Binet and Field. Branding is what primes the market for overall growth – especially in sectors with longer sales cycles like the design and construction industry – because it steadily reaches a broader audience and creates top-of-mind awareness. This can be particularly important when entering new markets or expanding your reach through mergers and acquisitions. The bottom line is that having a solid brand strategy can help you more effectively achieve your long-term strategic goals.



Reflecting on Brand Perception

To advance in a meaningful way, you must take a step back and reflect on the current state of your brand. Here are a few questions to start the conversation:

- Does your current brand embody your values and vision?
- Does your current brand resonate with your current and ideal market(s)?
- Is your brand showing up consistently (visually and verbally) across all internal and external channels?
- Do you know what your brand represents in the minds of your staff and clients?
- Can you and your staff clearly and concisely articulate what makes your firm different from others in your space?
- Who would answer the above questions differently than you? Why?

The answer to the last question is crucial because perception is not always reality. Sometimes, we need an external perspective to help us navigate our own biases and identify our current state. My marketing firm, **Enarche**, has helped many leaders work through these questions to create a clear path forward with a **Marketing & Business Development Audit**. Not every firm needs to reinvent who they are, but many should at least refocus. Wherever you land on the spectrum, give yourself (and your team) permission to push the boundaries of what's been done in the past.

And when you're ready to take **the next step**, we're here to help.

¹ "Brand Consistency—the competitive advantage and how to achieve it," Marq, 2021, <https://www.marq.com/blog/brand-consistency-competitive-advantage>.

² *2023 State of B2B Content Consumption and Demand Report for Marketers* (NetLine, 2023), <https://www.netline.com/netline002n/?d=glconsumption23&k=230328nlwccr>.

³ *Gen Z Workforce Report* (iHire, 2024), <https://www.ihire.com/resourcecenter/employer/pages/genz-workforce-report-2024>.

⁴ Sally Percy, "Why Do Change Programs Fail?," *Forbes*, March 13, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sallypercy/2019/03/13/why-do-change-programs-fail/>.

⁵ Katherine Lamb, "How Brand Drives Revenue," Revenue Marketing Alliance, September 8, 2023, <https://www.revenuemarketingalliance.com/how-brand-drives-revenue/>.

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*Dez Joslin is the founder and CEO of **Enarche**, a firm focused on bringing holistic marketing and business development expertise to the built environment industry. With a background in and out of the AE space, she is passionate about developing unconventional solutions that help her clients think beyond the what to infuse the why, cast vision, scale their organizations and build stronger, strategic brand identities. As CEO of **Enarche**, Dez leads a team of strategists, operationalists and creatives who rally behind one goal — connecting you with your ideal client.*