



*When it comes to brand strategy:*

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# Introduction




**Perhaps the most dramatic impact the internet has had on marketing has been to totally change the basis of communication between companies and their customers. Broadcasts have become dialogues, channels have proliferated and consumers have taken brands and used them as the basis of their own content. One result of this is a continuing discussion among marketers about how much control an organisation has over its brand in the digital era.**

Marketers can now contact potential customers at every point of their buying journey, at any time and in almost any location. They can deliver targeted, real-time communications designed to persuade an individual consumer to take the next step on their path to purchase. The promise is improved conversion rates and better return on marketing investment.

The downside is vastly increased complexity. As channels and partnerships proliferate and communication increasingly happens in real-time, it becomes harder and harder for marketers to check that their brand materials are being used correctly. This problem is compounded as the size of the company increases and its desire to involve customers in its communications grows. The bigger the organisation and the greater its geographical reach, the more difficult it becomes to monitor and control brand use.

The rise of social media has led to the much-quoted maxim that “your brand is not what you say it is, it’s what other people say it is.” The truth of that is still being debated, but what’s beyond dispute is that the more tightly marketers control how and where their brand appears, the more likely it is that the public

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**Neil Costello, head of marketing, Atom Bank**

perception of that brand will match the values it wishes to convey.

"I don't believe a brand can hand-on-heart fully control the brand message, but with the right culture and controls in place you can give yourselves the best shot." – Neil Costello, head of marketing, Atom Bank.

Brand control matters because brands are built on consistency. As one of Interbrand's 10 Brand Strength factors puts it: "if a brand is a promise, then lack of consistency means breaking your promises"<sup>1</sup>. So the strength of a company's brand or brands has far-reaching implications for its relationship with its customers. A strong brand means you can command a price premium – for example, the iPhone X sells for twice the price of the Samsung Galaxy S8. A strong brand also creates loyal customers who are not

only more likely to spend more money, but are also more likely to be brand advocates. And all this impacts on the performance of the business. A 2005 study by Booz Allen Hamilton and Woolf Olins found that 82% of brand-led companies outperformed their competitors<sup>2</sup>.

This report will look at the problems businesses face in establishing and maintaining control of their brands and the collateral through which they're created. It will examine how several brands have approached those challenges, and it will suggest some key lessons that can be learned from them.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.interbrand.com/views/exceedingly-good-solution-30-years-brand-valuation/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/the-secret-power-of-brands/0/steps/3340>

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# Methodology



**This report is based on telephone interviews with senior executives at brands and agencies, carried out in July and August 2019. The Drum would like to thank the following people in particular for their contributions:**

**Neil Costello**

head of marketing,  
Atom Bank

**Jaimie Gooden**

director of marketing  
and communications,  
Baker Tilly International

**Kara Keough**

global marketing director - brand,  
JLL

**Jens Lundgaard**

founder and CEO,  
Brandworkz

**Pete Markey**

CMO,  
TSB

**Lisa Roby**

managing partner,  
strategy and planning,  
Ogilvy Health UK

**Nadine Young**

managing director,  
Starcom



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The  
challenges  
around  
brand  
control

**Put simply, brand control - in a visual and messaging sense - involves making sure that your brand collateral is used correctly every time, by everyone.**

"It's only once brands have a forensic understanding of themselves, of what makes them distinct and of the value they add to their audience, that they can attempt to focus on the challenge of control." - Lisa Roby, managing partner, strategy and planning, Ogilvy Health UK.

Jens Lundgaard, founder and CEO of brand management software specialists Brandworkz breaks the challenge down into two parts. The first is education; the need for everyone in the company to know what the business stands for. The second is giving people the correct brand materials to use, and the tools to use them correctly.

Company-wide understanding of the brand's values is the foundation of brand control. It is no longer enough for that understanding to be limited to the marketing department, because brands are built at every point of contact between business and consumer. In a 2015 interview with CMO.com, UKTV CMO Simon Michaelides expressed the view that: "...anybody whose job it is to communicate with our consumers and influence their attitude and behaviour essentially sits under the 'Marketing' umbrella. Anybody who has an impact on the consumer's experience should be on the CMO's radar." <sup>3</sup> This doesn't necessarily mean that the CMO takes over every customer-facing department or activity, but it certainly means that everyone whose role involves consumer contact needs to be fully conversant with the organisation's brand values.



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Lisa Roby, managing partner, strategy and planning, Ogilvy Health UK



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But it's not just a question of those people whose role involves customer communication needing access to the brand's collateral to do their job. Everyone in the organisation will use the brand every day, even if it's just on a letterhead or a PowerPoint template. Marketers need to make sure the correct, current collateral is available to everyone who needs it. They also need to ensure that out-of-date collateral is taken out of circulation, along with any third-party properties such as images that the

company no longer has permission to use. There will always be demands for marketing materials that were not anticipated by the original designers. Bigger organisations will also need to manage the need for localisation for different regions or individual business units.

How these challenges are addressed depends on the attitude of the business. Some favour a fully centralised approach, where all control sits with a global marketing department. This has the advantage of simplifying oversight, but it can reduce responsiveness by placing the entire workload on one team. Other organisations adopt a more decentralised approach, allowing individual units to create their marketing materials. This can improve agility but makes it even more important to have monitoring procedures and tools in place to ensure consistency.

"Our ever-evolving brand guide covers our values, visual language, tone and usage guidelines. Whilst it isn't a fixed set of rules, it sets the boundaries for advertising, digital and the tone adopted by our people in the contact centre and responding in social.

Then procedures exist to control usage of our brand materials by Atom and third parties. The marketing team ensures these procedures are applied and adhered to." - Neil Costello, head of marketing, Atom Bank.

Companies are increasingly turning to software to help them maintain control of their brands. These products have moved beyond being simple repositories of brand collateral - the extranets and intranets of yesteryear - to allow the correct brand materials to be shared with internal teams and external partners. They now allow the creation of workflows and the sharing of brand guidelines and best practice, as well as the automatic updating of documents. They also include reporting and analytics tools.

"On our BrandHub we give predefined user groups tiered access to brand materials. This allows teams to access the materials they need, and us to control the master collateral from the centre. The other benefit of brand management software in an organisation of

scale is that you can manage workflows and approvals to help keep local and regional teams on track to producing great on-brand and on-message work." - Kara Keogh, global marketing director - brand, JLL.

However, many organisations are still struggling to integrate these tools with the rest of their martech stacks, compromising their effectiveness. As programmatic systems become ever-more prevalent and customer communication moves closer to happening in real-time, it will be vital to integrate brand management systems with the rest of the business's marketing automation. This will ensure that the right brand collateral is appearing on these automatically generated messages.

Another growing challenge for brand marketers is the rise of user-generated content. Consumers continue to be drawn to social media to share their experiences with brands, and social-savvy brands continue to celebrate those experiences as part of their marketing. The challenge for brands is to know what's going on and react quickly to user-generated activity, whether it's positive or negative.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cmo.com/interviews/articles/2015/4/13/cmocom-europe-interview-simon-michaelides-marketing-director-of-uktv.html>

How companies  
are approaching  
brand control



## TSB

TSB is a UK retail and commercial bank, formed six years ago when Lloyds TSB was required to sell part of its business by a European Commission ruling. According to CMO Pete Markey, TSB introduced its current brand control processes as part of its establishment.


The bank operates 550 branches across the UK and its brand team controls all the work done for the branches. This is partly to maintain consistency, but also because of the degree of regulation in the sector. It also uses its lead agency, Joint, as brand guardians on new projects.

"Brand consistency is really important. The marketing department should keep control, but you also need to be open to conversations about the work as it comes across your desk." – Pete Markey, CMO, TSB.

Localisation is supported by the marketing team for things like individual branches' charity work. In this case, there's a set of guidelines and templates for branches to use. However, for bank-wide charity activity such as TSB's support of Pride, all brand materials were developed centrally once the marketing departments had found out from the branches what was needed.

Markey keeps a close eye on brand health. His crucial metrics are Net Promoter Score and non-customer consideration, and he also watches the YouGov Brand Index.

"Within NPS there are measures around trust, innovation and so on. Looking at those over time shows whether you're being consistent. It's about unpicking the NPS to see what's going on." – Pete Markey, CMO, TSB.

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Pete Markey, CMO, TSB

## Atom Bank

Atom, which launched in 2016, is one of a new wave of challenger banks in the UK. It is purely app-based and has no branches.

“We’ve worked hard to define and build a brand-led culture. As a minimum every new starter to Atom, as part of their induction, will have time with the marketing team for us to detail the origins of the brand and its values. This is particularly important for those people dealing with customers and intermediaries on a regular basis. It also ensures that as people come and go there is consistency in controlling the brand story with our people and a documented history of its growth in place.” – Neil Costello, head of marketing, Atom Bank.

Like TSB, Atom’s youth as an organisation means its approach to brand control has been built for the internet age. The bank has a brand system which Costello describes as guidelines rather than rules: “a toolkit that details best practice examples as well as some dos and don’ts”. In

addition, there are procedures that cover the creation and usage of brand materials by Atom and its partners, assessment of and application of IP, domain management and the production of branded goods. These procedures are overseen by the marketing team.

At the time of writing (August 2019), the bank, according to Costello, was about to introduce a web-based portal bringing all its brand essentials together in one place for internal teams and partners to use.

“The portal will hold brand guidelines, stylistic principles, iconography standards etc. It will be set up with easily searchable asset libraries with custom metadata, licensing info and expiry dates which will help remove any confusion on the latest collateral. Over time we’ll bring in workflows to help develop brand materials like web features and designs in-house that can easily be passed to our front-end developers.” – Neil Costello, head of marketing, Atom Bank.

## Baker Tilly International

Baker Tilly is a network of 126 accountancy firms operating 800 offices across 147 countries. The brand control challenge created by such a distributed business is further complicated by the requirements of local legislation and the way the network has grown. Some countries have naming conventions, such as including the location in which a company operates as part of their business registration. In others the network has not been able to use the Baker Tilly name.

The network recently relaunched its brand, replacing its old logo and updating its colour scheme and visual style.

"Most importantly, we looked at the story we want to tell as a global, growing network. Our growth symbol, as it is known, is used by all firms. We can use the same colours and visual style and we can reflect our common voice in our marketing and social media." – Jaimie Gooden, director of marketing and communications, Baker Tilly International.

At the same time as Baker Tilly has been uniting its network behind its new identity, it has been careful to allow individual member firms to have a voice.

"Our French office recently produced some amazing marketing collateral that really captures the sense of fun and enthusiasm and the ambition of our members there. It fits perfectly with what we are looking to achieve at a global network level, without stifling the individual firm's understanding of what works in its market for its people." – Jaimie Gooden, director of marketing and communications, Baker Tilly International.

Gooden attributes the successful uptake of the new brand structure to the use of shared branding tools. These include a visual style guide, shared collateral, flexible templates and a guide to the network's language and vision. Member firms are also asked to share and demonstrate best practice to help improve the quality of work across the network.



We've built some frameworks - almost like a matrix - so people can run through all the different parts of our brand and, say, use this logo, this tag-line, these three colours from our palette. You don't have to use everything in the toolkit every time, you can make decisions to pare it back.

Kara Keough, global marketing director - brand, JLL



## JLL

JLL is a commercial real-estate company with more than 90,000 employees, operating out of over 300 offices in 80 countries. Its 2016 rebrand encapsulates the balance at the heart of brand control, between the needs for consistency and distinctiveness.

"Before 2016 we had a very simple visual identity system. It was far easier to be consistent, but it was becoming harder to do anything interesting. In 2016 we went for a much more complex, more beautiful system. We knew it would be more difficult in compliance terms, but it's great for us in terms of standing out in the market." – Kara Keough, global marketing director - brand, JLL.

The company's marketing structure is based around three regional CMOs with their own creative teams, and a series of brand hubs using Brandworkz technology that are the first port of call for people using the brand materials, whether that's internal teams or

agencies. It also appointed a global brand agency of record last year. Keough then handles brand globally. Her role involves a great deal of education, liaising with the regional creative teams, sharing brand updates and explaining the rationale behind brand decisions.

"We've built some frameworks – almost like a matrix – so people can run through all the different parts of our brand and, say, use this logo, this tag-line, these three colours from our palette. You don't have to use everything in the toolkit every time, you can make decisions to pare it back. So, we do training around that and make sure that everyone who picks the toolkit up understands how those decisions are made." – Kara Keough, global marketing director - brand, JLL.

JLL also uses the brand hubs to share best practice as a way of driving efficiencies across the group.

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key takeaways

- i) **Culture is key.** Brands are built by consistency of message at every touchpoint with the customer. Everyone in the organisation – and certainly everyone in a customer-facing role – needs to understand the brand and what it stands for.
- ii) **Someone needs to police the brand.** Whether it's an agency or the marketing department, or a combination of both, someone has to make sure everyone is using the right brand collateral in the right way, and that they understand why.
- iii) **Central control doesn't mean uniformity.** Brands need to be consistent, but in large organisations they also need to reflect local and regional needs and characteristics. The best brand control is a dialogue between the central brand team and the people on the ground.
- iv) **Control shouldn't stifle creativity.** As Nadine Young, MD of media agency Starcom puts it: "A brand is only powerful if it wins hearts, so creativity is key to building it. It doesn't conflict with maintaining brand control." The best brand systems are guidelines rather than rules, and once again dialogue is crucial.
- v) **Celebrate good work.** This isn't just a matter of making people aware of best practice. Sharing great work can also bring efficiencies, as it avoids people having to replicate work when they don't need to be.
- vi) **Brand systems should be capable of evolving.** New channels continue to emerge, and there will always be circumstances that the brand designers didn't anticipate. If understanding of the brand fundamentals is strong, the brand should be able to adapt seamlessly to new circumstances.

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