

Brand DEMAND

CREATING THE HOLY GRAIL

Most people believe a great launch starts with a great product. They're wrong. Being 'great' isn't enough and a product is merely the starting point. The reality is that the overall brand experience must be so perfectly suited to the needs and desires of its customer that it creates its own demand and very little selling needs to be done. **Neil Osborne** explains how to turn a product range into a brand which thrives.

Let's be clear on one thing from the start. Having a great idea for a product range doesn't ensure its success. In fact, in some select cases it's not even necessary. But by building your new product range into a brand, it can potentially determine the survival of your business.

The successful mainstream brands in our industry are built into a total 'experience.' They're not individual products or short ranges that just take up shelf space. Having been made from many elements working together, every time a customer is touched it brings to life the heart, soul and story of those brands.

Another clarion call is that a brand is not one single action, image or product. It's an amalgam. Brands are built in layers, over time, with each successive overlay strengthening the total structure. The seven brand building blocks (see inset) — none of which individually ensure success — must be melded together to effectively build a thriving brand.

What makes a brand?

Simplistically, a brand is a promise ... to your customers. As the creator, you need to know what makes up the promise, how you're going to deliver

it and why you'll continue doing it, again and again.

The 'again and again' of brand building is an ongoing process, as is every single, individual product launch; they're not just a single 'event' that happens.

As the most valuable brand in history, Apple 'owns' the product launch process — staging it over many weeks and months. Its fans are almost evangelical in their brand advocacy. The Apple brand has so successfully enraptured them that many queue for days to buy items they never before imagined they needed.

The Seven P's of brand building

New products and ranges are launched every month — from overseas as well as local creations — but few fulfil their potential. As a result our industry has seen more than its fair share of hiccups, misses and those that were dead even before they set foot on the shelf.

In future articles I will cover each of the seven P's of brand building needed to turn your product range into a thriving salon brand.

Part One: Product and Proposition

No matter if you're creating a product range from a custom/private formula, buying a generic formula under your own private label or importing a range from overseas, the product and its proposition is the soul of any



brand-building journey. It meshes together several foundational pieces of your future brand:

i. The ideal user: Know your ideal users and build your product concept to suit them.

You need to be clear on who your customers are, because a successful launch (and brand) won't happen if the market wants one thing and you're delivering another.

Once you've clearly defined your buyers, the concept, USP and formula should all align and satisfy their basic need. Are they baby boomers who need anti-ageing product regimens, or teenagers after preventative skin care? To explain: if you're creating an anti-ageing product, the viscosity, texture and performance of the product is important. In contrast, the viscosity of a teenage range would be lighter and cleansers more important.

ii. The concept and USP: Know how your USP and product concept makes you stand out. A Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is a term used to define what differentiates your brand and your uniqueness. The litmus test for a USP is to answer the question "Why you?" Why should someone buy your brand, use your product, or prefer your offering over another? One USP approach is to base your product concept around a unique ingredient and/or performance factors. When formulating, consider how your product is going to deliver benefits differently, faster, easier, or more effectively. Which is it? What are your key or supporting ingredients



— AHAs, vitamins, antioxidants or a specific SPF factor? Are you paraben- and sodium lauryl sulphate-free, allergy tested, or not tested on animals? Your ultimate goal is to create a unique product concept that solves your users' needs.

iii. The formula: Ensure your formulation supports your founding USP.

As the cosmeceutical segment of our industry continues to grow, there are growing pressures on product efficacy and results. Make sure you source or create a formula that delivers on its promises and displays uniqueness.

Once your formulation has been tested and has a proven, stable shelf life, it's important you line up all other components to complement your founding (USP) such as:

- a) What colour will add to its intended purpose? If it's a clinical product, perhaps white or skin-tone may be important.
- b) Does the product need fragrance? If it's a natural or organic product, should it be a very subtle fragrance?
- c) How is the product going to be applied? Does your formula and viscosity match the planned method of application?

Needless to say, your formula and claims need to pass the necessary legalities. The best reference on this subject is the Australian Therapeutic Goods Act — visit tga.gov.au

iv. The range size: Think like a salon owner when defining the size of your range.

THE SEVEN P'S OF BRAND BUILDING

The traditional marketing model consists of just four Ps - product, place, price and promotion. However, in the beauty industry a successful new product launch requires the model is tailored to specifically suit the idiosyncratic needs of this market.

Simplistically, the Seven Ps for the salon industry consist of:

1. Product & Proposition:

Your product formula is the soul of your brand. What's its personality? What are its unique traits that deliver on your users' needs and wants?

2. Packaging & Performance:

If your formula is the soul, your packaging is the spirit that connects to your users. How can your packaging design and its functionality deliver repeatedly?

3. Price & Positioning:

Price can dictate how your brand is perceived in the marketplace. Is your price complementing or undermining your brand's positioning?

4. Placement & Partners:

There are many channels available to place your brand. Which reflect your brand values? Are there business partners that can help you access your ideal user?

5. Promotion & Proof:

Quality and value can be added to brand through social proof, performance and results. They are today's consumers' language.

6. People & Passion

Your brand values should flow through your people. How can you instil your passion so the right people are attracted?

7. Promises & Professionalism

The ultimate success is keeping your word and delivering on your promises that form the foundations of your brand.

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After defining your core product concept and target users, the next step is to plan the size of the product range.

Depending on your USP and users, the first phase of development (and launch) could consist of just a couple of specific ranges and perhaps (budget allowing) a small collection of speciality products. Conversely you may have created a really strong key product and are fortunate enough to launch with an ultra-small range.

The golden rule is the smaller the range, the better — because the most efficient way to make money is by creating stock turns — and a large range takes longer to turn and ties up money in stock.

v. The proposition: Tie all the pieces together.

Building a story and creating a heritage are great ways to get cut-through and respect early in the life of your brand. Think about the story around your foray into the product world and actively build it into the brand proposition.

What other elements compliment your product formula and USP? Is there a heritage or history behind an ingredient? Has it been used for hundreds of years or does it stem back to the self-medicating approach of many eastern countries? Or perhaps it's the latest synthetic ingredient from a leading European cosmetic lab? Either way, a creditable story adds to your industry credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of your users.

A different application technique is an equally valuable tool to support a new ingredient or product. Think about the ideal services your product range can support in-store: it is a quick acting product that suits express treatments, or does it have specific processing needs and particular application methods? These types of ideas will be discussed in greater detail in a future article, however it's important to extend your thoughts along these lines from the very beginning.

I talk regularly with entrepreneurs and product companies seeking help with their 'revolutionary' products. After listening to their ideas I'll often ask about their plans to build a brand. The classic response? “We haven't got that far yet; we just want to launch this product and see how it goes.” That's where they come unstuck.

After years of experience, I've narrowed down success to being as simple as working from the basics up. Knowing what to do, when to do it and how to do it — towards building a brand. ■

Neil Osborne has devoted more than 30 years of his working life to making a difference to businesses in the salon industry. As a sales performance consultant, trainer and business mentor he works with and partners some of the most dynamic and demanding sales-driven organisations, helping them grow and change their sales results. Contact him at The SALES CATALYST, 1300 302 859 or visit www.thesalescatalyst.com.au

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