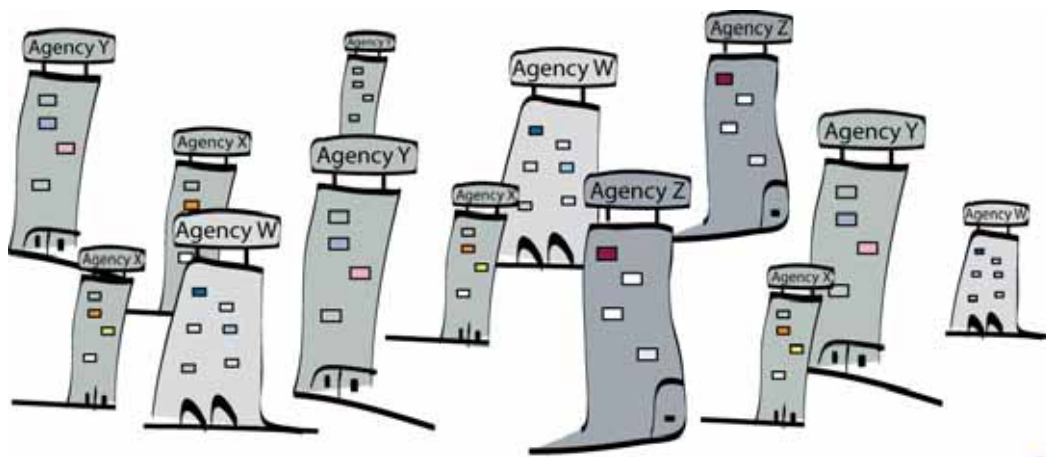


# 10 Essential Recruitment Branding Guidelines

*A Guide To Building Recruitment Brand Strength  
By Quintessential Marketing - The Recruitment  
Feedback System Experts.*



So, what's your  
point of difference?



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## ➔ Introduction

Dear Recruiter,

The 10 Essential Recruitment Branding Guidelines contained within this document is vital reading for all Recruitment Agencies serious about improving the strength of their recruitment brand.

Each guideline is based on a proven branding principle drawn from a variety of sources – respected marketing text books, commentary from leading brand ‘thought-leaders’ and Quintessential’s own experience in working with recruitment firms over the last 10 years.

Each branding guideline contained within this document has been written with the recruitment industry in mind to ensure that you are provided with relevant and useful information that can be directly applied to your own situation.

Read, absorb and, most importantly, act. And if you have any comments or questions about the information contained in this document I welcome your enquiry.

Kind regards,



Paul Quinn

Managing Director  
**Quintessential Marketing**

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### **Our Awards:**

- :: Winners of the BRW Magazine Fast 100 Award (2010).
- :: Winners of the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 Asia Pacific Award (2010).
- :: Winners of the SmartCompany Fastest 50 Growing Companies Award (2009).
- :: Winners of the Deloitte Technology Fast 50 (Australia) Award (2009).
- :: Winners of the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 Asia Pacific Award (2009).

## ➔ What is a Brand?

Advertising guru David Ogilvy once described a brand as:

*“The intangible sum of a product (or service’s) attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it is advertised”.*

Put simply, a brand is a promise: a promise to deliver a product, a service or an experience. The brand is represented in a variety of ways including but not limited to your logo, your tagline, your adverts, and your corporate websites. It encompasses everything from the décor of your office to the smile on your receptionist’s face as s/he greets you. To ensure branding success you need to take all of these things into consideration and get them working together in unison to present a consistent and relevant message about your company, your products and services and the experience the customer can expect to receive when they deal with your company.

## ➔ Why Is Branding So Important for Recruiters?

Strong recruitment brands can provide the following benefits:

1. Your brand can **attract and repel opportunities**. It has a powerful effect on people's opinions and actions.
2. A strong brand can **bring repeat sales without advertising** while a bad one can cause a business to fail.
3. Research has proven **that people will pay more** for a brand that they trust. Strong brands can also help insulate against any price cutting tactics of your competition.
4. Having a strong brand or reputation **can influence people**. It can influence people to buy. It can influence people to choose you over your competitors.
5. A strong brand **builds a customer's confidence and trust BEFORE a sale is made**.
6. **Branding helps your business by simplifying your customers' decision** - when they need your product or service they need only to think of you.

*“Brands are the express checkout for people living their lives at ever increasing speed.”*

– Brandweek

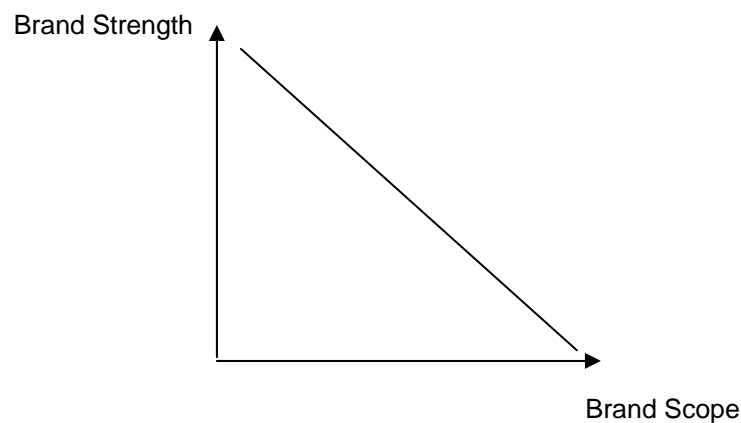
## ➔ 10 Essential Recruitment Branding Guidelines

### (i) Narrow the scope of the brand.

This is a key concept from branding gurus – Al and Laura Ries.

History has proven time and time again – the narrower the focus, the more successful the brand. If McDonalds, for example were to open a chain of restaurants selling Chinese food under the McDonalds label – they would undoubtedly flop because the new product line blurs and broadens their existing brand positioning. Likewise Coke would fail if they started to sell flavoured milk using the Coke name. And if a specialist IT recruitment company tried to use its brand to sell IT software, sales would undoubtedly struggle.

The power of a brand is inversely proportional to its scope; hence the quickest way to destroy a brand is to extend your offer to include products or services that don't fit within the existing brand definition. Recruiters often make this mistake. Building a solid brand in one niche segment and then diluting that brand by entering new segments and trying to extend that brand and be all things to all people.



The effect of extending the scope of your brand with products and/or services that do not fit within your existing brand scope can be seen in diminished market share, a loss of brand identity, and cannibalisation of one's own sales. Often too, the addition of new products and/or services can directly attack the strength of the core brand. For example, does Extra Strength Paracetamol imply that regular Paracetamol isn't strong enough?

NOTE: narrowing a brand's focus does not mean you have to carry a limited line of products or services, it merely means that the products and/or services you offer should "fit" within the existing brand's scope. Starbucks, for example, offer 30 different types of coffee. Thus recruitment agencies can effectively promote the same brand for products and/or services complimentary to their specialist area of recruitment but a new brand should be created for new non-recruitment related services.

In short, your goal is to broaden your appeal, and narrow your position.

**(ii) Brand Extensions, sub-brands, sibling brands.**

A brand extension uses the name of an existing brand either in part or in full and adds additional words to extend its meaning. For example, Julia Ross offering 'Julia Ross IT' and 'Julia Ross Executive' as was tried in the late 1990s.

Brand extensions are often used in recruitment; agencies argue that they are capitalising on the dominant brand's reputation. However, far from capitalising on the core brand, often brand extensions do more harm than good; eroding the very reputation that the agency seeks to promote.

Every brand has an identity or meaning and it is this meaning that should drive whether or not you use brand extensions. The key to whether they will or won't work comes down to two key questions:

- (i) What does your brand stand for now in the mind of your audience?
- (ii) Would a brand extension diminish your perceived speciality or enhance it?

If the answer to the second question is "diminish", then you should consider creating a new brand.

A general rule of thumb is that if your agency's brand is positioned as an industry / niche specialist, and you are planning on entering a new market or industry where customers would ideally perceive your agency as a specialist, then a new brand is required. Consider the following fictitious example:

'Periwinkle Staffing' is a recruitment agency that has worked hard to position themselves as a specialist accounting recruiter. After three years in this market Periwinkle is ready to expand. And because one of their founders has experience in the legal arena they've decided to break into this market with a brand extension: "Periwinkle Legal Staffing".

The outcome of this strategy: failure. Clients and candidates are confused about what Periwinkle now do – *'Are they accounting or legal specialists? They used to specialise in Accounting but now I'm not so sure?'* Because of the perception that a recruiter requires quite unique skills and industry experience to be effective in both the accounting and legal recruitment markets, clients and candidates find it hard to conceive that Periwinkle – the accounting specialists – can also be effective in legal recruitment. Accordingly, Periwinkle Staffing's brand strength begins to erode.

The smarter alternative? 'Periwinkle Staffing' has built significant brand equity as an accounting specialist, thus in order to gain credibility and maximise the opportunity for success in the legal recruitment market the company needs to launch a new specialist brand name for it's legal recruitment operation.

**Examples from outside our industry:**

- In the 1980s Gucci went through a period of almost unfettered licensing: at one point, 22,000 items bore the company's name in up to ten different logo formats. Sales plunged.
- Toyota launched Lexus because the Toyota brand couldn't fill the luxury car category. Customers buy a Lexus not because it's made by Toyota, but in spite of it. Hence the brand is marketed as 'Lexus' as opposed to 'Toyota Lexus'.

- Holiday Inn launched 'Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza' in the USA, an executive level chain of hotels. Research, however, showed that customers considered it a nice hotel but too expensive for the Holiday Inn chain. The company finally got the message, removed "Holiday Inn" from the name, and the Crowne Plaza business began to grow.

**(iii) Own a word in your prospect's mind.**

Volvo owns 'safety'. Mercedes owns 'prestige'. 3M owns 'innovation'. Kleenex owns 'tissue'. Your brand cannot be all things to all people. In fact the most important aspect of a brand is its single-mindedness. You can communicate this single-mindedness by owning a word or category; the more specific the word used to describe what customers can expect the better.

**(iv) Everyone loves a Specialist.**

Who would you prefer to work on your triple bypass surgery?

Your local doctor? A heart specialist fresh out of medical school? OR a heart specialist who has been performing triple bypass surgeries for the past 15 years?

It is a basic human instinct to equate experience and specialist knowledge with better performance and when clients decide which recruiter to use this instinct comes into play for them too.

By specialising in one area, every time a potential client has a 'fire' in your area of speciality you will be remembered and called on for your 'fire fighting' skills. It's better to be a specialist than the 'safe unknown' – as Dire Straits once sang, *"Sitting on the fence is a dangerous course: you might get a bullet from the peace keeping force"*.

In short, customers want to deal with agencies that speak their language. Being a specialist helps to reinforce your understanding of the nuances of your customer's market.

**(v) Perception is reality.**

Purchased a bottle of perfume or cologne for your partner recently? A \$250 bottle and a \$25 bottle might in fact cost the same to manufacture ...often it's little more than the marketing that sets them apart.

The same applies to your agency; what really matters is how your clients and candidates perceive you. For more than 5 years Quinttessential has run a survey amongst recruitment agency owners asking to describe their key differentiator. Without question the most common response received is 'The skills and service provided by our consultants'. Two points to note here: (i) if every second agency promotes the same point of difference, then it's really not a difference at all. And (ii) if you think your consultants deliver market-leading service but research reveals that this may not be the case, then every time you try to grow your business by promoting service excellence you will suffer disappointment.

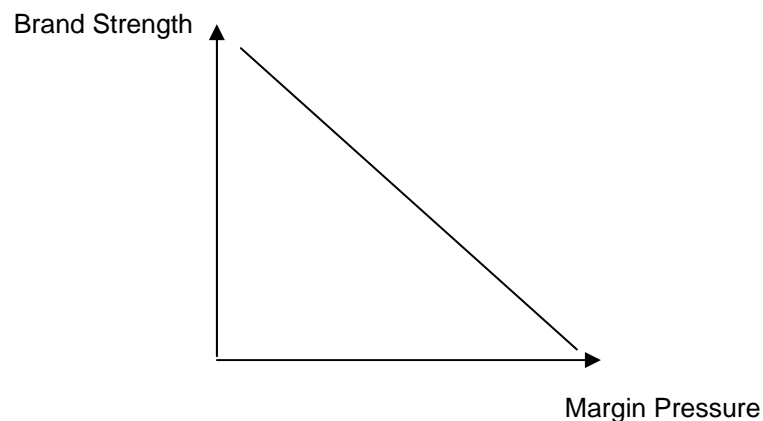
That's why gaining a clear understanding of your client's real perceptions of your business will help you better position your agency to take advantage of the inherent strengths of your brand and to minimise any perceived weaknesses. And don't just

treat this 'reality check' as a once a year exercise either – leading brands like Apple, Amazon and eBay take the opportunity collect client feedback at every key touch point in the buying process.

**(vi) Understand the relationship between brand strength & margin pressure**

"Margin pressure from larger recruitment firms" is often highlighted in recruitment publications as one of the key competitive pressures faced by small to medium sized recruiters.

In essence, unless your strategy specifically focuses on being the lowest cost supplier (eg. The Flight Centre, Bunnings Warehouse, Walmart in the US), then significant margin pressure is often the result of a weak brand. Why? Because if your brand name and reputation were so strong that your clients demand your services, margins would have very little impact on the decision making process.



At the other end of the spectrum, however, if you have no competitive differentiation whatsoever, then the decision making process essentially comes down to (a) can you deliver?, and (b) how cheap can you deliver for? As such, there is an inverse relationship between margin pressure and brand strength.

Recruitment Agencies must recognise this relationship and invest in creating a truly differentiated brand that stands for something clients and candidates truly value. When clients seek you out as the recognised leader in their segment, then margin pressure all but subsides.

**(vii) Be consistent.**

*"To establish a favourable and well-defined brand personality with the consumer the advertiser must be consistent. You can't use a comic approach today and a scientist in a white jacket tomorrow without diffusing and damaging your brand personality."*

- Morris Hite.

BMW has been calling itself "the ultimate driving machine" for more than 35 years. Markets may change, but brands should very rarely be tampered with. In times of change or uncertainty your brand should remain a guiding light of consistency. Consistency breeds familiarity and trust. Trust results in sales.

Contrary to what we often see with many well-known recruiters, decisions to change colours, logos and brand taglines should not be taken lightly.



**(viii) Know your 'Point of difference'.**

Your brand must promote a strong 'point of difference' that is truly valued by your target market (ie. backed up by research).

*"Many brands are really just brand names because they either have lost their distinctive characteristics or are not perceived to be unique."*

- Duane E. Knapp, The Brand Mindset.

The first step in this process is to understand your customers: their likes and dislikes, their needs and wants, what they truly value, and how these needs relate to the services you provide. Then take this information and compare your brand to the brands of your competitors – is there a clear point of difference? The ultimate goal is to address the question of why your customers should use you over your competitors. Focus on building both tangible and intangible answers to this question and you will dramatically increase your likelihood of growing a strong and meaningful brand.

Communicate what is unique about your brand as often and consistently as you can. As your customers' awareness of your brand and what it can do for them increase, so too should your sales.

**(ix) Align Your Brand with your Strategy, Mission and Values.**

Your brand position should be reflected in your agency's strategy, mission, vision, and values.

Your brand's positioning is your 'True North' for all of your business activities, not just your marketing strategy. Virgin Blue's brand personality, for example, is reflected in everything they do – the tangible (eg. their staff uniforms) and intangible (eg. the 'can-do' attitude they look for in new recruits). Hence Virgin Blue's brand positioning closely aligns to the company's strategy, mission and vision to deliver one powerful and consistent message.

**(x) Understand the relationship between PR and Branding.**

Brands that are capable of generating favourable publicity in the media have a far greater likelihood of success in the marketplace. Anita Roddick built the Body Shop into a global brand with no advertising, but with massive amounts of publicity. Starbucks also followed this formula to success – it's a massive global brand name but when was the last time you saw Starbucks with a paid advertisement on TV or in Magazines?

Public Relations activities are an extremely effective way to launch your new brand to a wide audience. Conversely, advertising is often more effective once credibility has been established in the media and when used to sustain (or defend) your presence.

In the recruitment arena, the powerful brand of Morgan & Banks grew to dominance in the 1990s largely off the back of a concerted public relations strategy. By releasing insightful employer survey results to the media each quarter the brand quickly became the 'go to' for all TV/radio/newspaper media enquiries relating to recruitment matters.

## ➔ How well do you know your brand?

Use our 5 minute brand health check to see how well you know your brand:

1. Do you know what your clients, candidates and staff think about your brand? Write a sentence that describes what each stakeholder thinks when they see your brand.
2. Does your brand clearly reinforce why someone should choose you over your competitors?
3. Do you know your brand's core values? How well do you promote these values?
4. Is your brand promoted consistently throughout your organisation and across all mediums?
5. Could all staff tell you what your brand stands for without prompting? Would their answers be consistent?
6. How well does your brand align with your client and candidate needs?
7. Do you 'own' a word or category in the minds of your prospects?
8. How well does your brand align with your corporate strategy and company culture?
9. Have you identified your Unique Selling Propositions? Does your brand reinforce these differences?
10. Do you have a brand positioning statement and tagline? How consistently is it promoted to your target audience?
11. Do you measure brand strength by asking your customers about their perceptions of your brand in a formalised way? How often? (Should be at least once a year).

## ➔ Need help?

Quinntessential is an Australian-based marketing firm that helps recruitment agencies and HR departments attract and retain candidates and clients via a suite of subscription-based online products and services.

Our core product is **PeoplePulse** – the popular online survey software used by over 75 recruitment agencies to collect and report on actionable client and candidate feedback. (Find out more: <http://www.peoplepulse.com.au>).

While we are not branding consultants, we understand that all successful branding and marketing strategies are built on a foundation of customer intimacy. This insight is exactly what PeoplePulse delivers.

Our proven online survey software helps both big and small recruiters get closer to their candidates and clients by systemising their client and candidate feedback systems. PeoplePulse clients include Adecco, Hudson, Talent 2 and Michael Page right through to small 3 person agencies.

### What's more ...

Our feedback systems will have a direct positive impact on your bottom line.

How so?

Because we work with you to integrate some simple, proven business-generating and referral questions into your client and candidate questionnaires. You can rest assured that every person who comes into contact with your business will be asked their opinion and asked if they know of anyone else you might be able to help.

It's simple and it works.

So our commitment to you lies in establishing a system to collect great, useful, and actionable client and candidate feedback ... AND generate new business leads and referrals at the same time.



### Ready to get going?

It's simple - phone us on +61 2 9232 0172, or email us at [peoplepulse@quintessential.com.au](mailto:peoplepulse@quintessential.com.au). We'll show you a demonstration, send you a pricing sheet, and get you set up as soon as you're ready.

**Special Offer:** Mention the special offer code "**WP-12**" upon booking and new clients can receive a 10% discount off their first year PeoplePulse subscription.

We look forward to establishing an effective feedback system for your organisation – one that will help improve the strength and power of your brand by delivering a deeper insight into what your clients and candidates are *really* thinking.



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