

University of Southern California
Marshall School of Business
6:30pm-9:30pm
Spring 2021

MKT 533: Strategic Branding

Instructor: Sasha Strauss
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Office Hours: Zoom Meetings
M 5:30pm-6pm | M 6pm-6:30pm.
Book via Calendly (link will be emailed) or request alternative times via email.

Introduction

All growing organizations communicate.
How? Why? About what?

People buy what they know exists.
Why? How do they know what's available? How do they choose?

If you don't communicate, you're not considered.
Engineer a brand that strategically connects with target audiences.

Any corporation, religion, non-profit, startup, etc. that wants to exist (and hopefully grow) needs to strategically communicate its intentions and value. That might be about the products they build, the customers they serve, or the industry they represent – but beyond *what* or *how*, audiences also want to know *why* they are in business to begin with. So that when competitive price and function are equal, what should compel the buyer to choose your offering over the others available, time and time again?

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25 years of professional work in the world of brand strategy, **Sasha Strauss** is excited to share what he and his colleagues at Innovation Protocol have learned about the dialogue between brands and their consumers in today's world of communication.

In this intensive course, you'll explore a brand's powerful relationship with its employees, shareholders, and customers—and you'll learn how to harness this relationship for the benefit of your own personal and professional futures.

You'll study how to reach, retain, and influence target customers in ways that generate results.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the power of a brand's relationship with employees
2. Describe the power of a brand's relationship with shareholders
3. Describe the power of a brand's relationship with customers
4. Describe the many touchpoints of a brand experience
5. Conduct in-depth research and analysis of a brand's history, culture, and objectives
6. Reach target customers to increase sales
7. Retain existing target customers to maintain and increase sales
8. Influence your target customer to make decisions that strengthen the brand

Readings

1. **Designing Brand Identity (5th Edition)** by Alina Wheeler
 - ISBN-13: 978-1118980828

Coursework

In-class Quizzes (average of top three scores): 20%

You'll be given four pop quizzes covering textbook readings as well as topics from lectures and guest speakers. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped at the end of the semester.

In-class Participation / LinkedIn Engagement: 10%

Participate in class conversations with your professor, guests, and peers, follow the course LinkedIn page, and keep your eyes open for bonus points to be applied to quizzes!

Progressive Capstone Brand Strategy Project: 70%

Each student will be assigned a brand to study for the entire course. All homework assignments are to be applied directly to that assigned brand, ultimately culminating in a 5-minute video recorded presentation as the course final.

A) Brand Analysis / Due: February 12 / 10%

You'll audit and analyze internal and external communication materials of your brand in order to understand existing communication tactics. Materials may include employee handbooks, marketing collateral, offering/service descriptions, digital/online presence, videos, social media, press clippings, executive presentations, co-branding materials, etc. Then you'll summarize your findings and key insights on 3 PowerPoint slides, with an appendix/work summary of up to 5 slides.

B) Industry Audit / Due: February 26 / 10%

You'll dig into the industry, identifying and engaging newsletters, conferences, blogs, publications, member organizations, professional associations, political groups, research reports, social communities, retailer media, online video, and more. Then you'll summarize your industry findings and key insights on 3 PowerPoint slides, with an appendix/work summary of up to 5 slides.

C) Competitive Analysis / Due: March 11 / 10%

You'll evaluate 5 direct and 5 indirect competitors, exploring best and worst brand practices, strategic brand opportunities, product portfolio / brand architecture models, visual systems, campaign strategies and more. Then you'll summarize your competitive findings and key insights on 5 PowerPoint slides, with an appendix/work summary of up to 5 slides.

D) Customer Journey Map / Due: March 26 / 10%

You'll map customer journeys for your assigned brand from low-awareness to one of strong brand loyalty by plotting key touchpoints. Via images and brief descriptions, you'll sequence where/how/when/why does the customer casually hear of, intentionally read about, venture out to experience, physically try, buy, share, and re-buy your brands offerings? You'll summarize your customer findings and key insights on 1 PowerPoint slide, with an appendix/work summary of up to 5 slides.

E) Brand Presentation / Due: April 9 / 30%

You'll demonstrate your aptitude for brand strategy by sharing a 5-minute virtual presentation (no slide limit) for the class at the end of the semester. The presentation will summarize your process, findings, insights, and recommendations for your assigned

brand's executive leadership team. You will also submit your PowerPoint presentation deck via email as part of your final assignment for the course.

Class Schedule

This class moves at the pace of the students. Each week Sasha works towards milestone goals that sync course readings with topics covered in class -- but each week may include a guest speaker, real in-market brand strategy case study, breakout group tasks, or a pop-quiz.

Reading Pace and Tentative Class Schedule

Part 1 | Introduction to Brand Strategy

- **WEEK ONE | Jan 18 – no class**
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **WEEK TWO | Jan 25**
Read Pages 2 – 98 of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure
- **WEEK THREE | Feb 1**
Read Pages 2 – 98 of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure
- **WEEK FOUR | Feb 8**
Complete Pages 2 - 98 of Designing Brand Identity

Part 2 | Brand Equity & Brand (Value) Building

- **WEEK FIVE | Feb 15 - no class**
Presidents' Day
- **WEEK SIX | Feb 22**
Read Pages 102 – 208 of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure
- **WEEK SEVEN | Mar 1**
Read Pages 102 – 208 of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure
- **WEEK EIGHT | Mar 8**
Read Pages 102 – 208 of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure

Part 3 | Managing Brand Programs

- **WEEK NINE | Mar 15 – no class**
Spring Break
- **WEEK TEN | Mar 22**
Read Pages 102 – 208 of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure

- **WEEK ELEVEN | Mar 29**
Read Pages 211 – 313 (Best Practices/Case Study portion of Designing Brand Identity at your leisure)
- **WEEK TWELVE | Apr 5**
Final Project - Peer Workshare & Consultation
Sasha will be available for one-on-one consultation on Final Project progress

Part 4 | Final Brand Projects (mandatory)

- **WEEK THIRTEEN | Apr 12**
Final Project Presentations
- **WEEK FOURTEEN | Apr 19**
Final Project Presentations
- **WEEK FIFTEEN | Apr 26**
Final Project Presentations

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Class Conduct/Netiquette

Professionalism will be expected at all times. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. We will show respect for one another by exhibiting patience, courtesy, and professionalism in our exchanges. Appropriate language and restraint from verbal attacks upon those whose perspectives differ from your own is a requirement. Courtesy and kindness are the norm for those who participate in my class.

Synchronous Sessions

In order to earn full participation points, students must actively participate in all synchronous sessions via computer or laptop, with a webcam and headset/speakers. You are expected to be in a location with a reliable internet connection and without distractions. You need to be able to fully engage at all times. Students are expected to be visually present and to ask thought-provoking questions, offer relevant comments, and answer questions from faculty in a clear and concise manner. If the class meets at a time outside of 7:00am to 10:00pm in your time zone, please consider registering for a section that meets then. If you are unable to do this, please contact your professor immediately.

As outlined in the student handbook, there are specific expectations of a student attending class online. When attending, present and act appropriate as if you were in a physical classroom.

Please do:

- Attend class from a quiet area, free of distractions.
- Dress respectfully. Video conference business meetings are and will be the norm, so practice your professional telepresence.
- If you use a virtual background, please keep it respectfully professional
- Display both your first and last name during video conferencing and Synchronous class meetings.
- Respectfully minimize distractions by muting and or turning video off when moving around
- Engage in appropriate tone and language with instructors or classmates
- Disagree respectfully
- Respectfully pay attention to classmates

Please do not:

- Engage in a simultaneous activity (e.g., using a telephone, reading a book, knitting)
- Interact with persons who are not part of the class
- Leave frequently or not be on camera for extended periods of time
- Have other persons or pets in view of the camera
- Behave in an overtly inattentive manner (looking distracted, not participating)

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255 suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | *Title IX* – (213) 821-8298 equity.usc.edu, or titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710 uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101 diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, *HSC*: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu, or emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, *HSC*: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 dps.usc.edu, ability@usc.edu.

USC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in reaching their academic potential. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs. If you have a disability which may impact your performance, attendance, or grades in this course and require accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Services and Programs (dsp.usc.edu) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS (Grace Ford Salvatori Hall) 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.