

Make Consumers Feel Understood

Branders (Zurich, Switzerland): Marisa Güntlisberger, senior brand consultant, omnichannel experience, and Thea Ferretti, senior brand consultant

While I have worked with Güntlisberger and Ferretti in a limited capacity for Alchimie Forever, my sisters Rachel and Cyrille, who run our sister company, Forever Institut, in Geneva, have worked with them for

a complete rebranding of our medical spa. Here are Güntlisberger and Ferretti's recommendations:

1. Start with the brand's purpose or belief: Consumers want to buy brands that are in line with their values and aspirations. Take us on your journey!

2. Explain how you do things: The way you approach your purpose or belief is different than any other. Tell us what makes you unique.

3. Choose to focus: If you want your brand to be or say too many things at

once, you will not stand for anything at all. Stay focused. Keep it simple.

4. Test it with your trusted entourage: A great way to know if you're on the right track is to test your brand story. What are first spontaneous associations among your trusted entourage? Is it authentic and aspirational? Does it fit with your brand?

5. Finish with the ultimate consumer benefit: If nothing else, the end must be memorable. Make us feel understood. Connect with us. Think of the end as a well-crafted slogan-like statement that conveys the brand promise from a consumer perspective.

Your Brand's Storyteller and Audience

CIBU (owned by Ratner Companies, Vienna, VA): Jennifer Mapp Bressan, brand manager

Bressan is one of the best brand storytellers, particularly in social media and on video, as is evidenced by what she has accomplished with CIBU hair care. To her, the five critical elements of successful brand story telling are:

1. The tone: If your brand were a person, what role would it play in your customer's life? Friend? Client? Doctor? Trusted expert? Nail that down first and then speak to her in that tone of voice—always.

2. The narrator: A face person offers your customer a living, breathing brand identity to animate your story. If your face person has played a critical role in the brand evolution—amazing. If not, fall back on tone and brand role. The narrator for a clinical skin care brand story should be a dermatologist (or his daughter), not a makeup artist or chatty gal pal.

3. The main character: The primary protagonist in your brand story isn't your brand, it's your customer. Weave her likeness, her feedback, her experience and the depth of her loyalty into your brand story via social



If you want your brand to be or say too many things at once, you will not stand for anything at all. Stay focused. Keep it simple.

media, influencer outreach and content marketing.

4. The parable: Great literature enriches the life of the reader by revealing some universal truth about the human condition. Brand storytelling should similarly enrich or simplify your customer's life. Your brand parables can be delivered via a 25-second eye shadow application tutorial or an international philanthropic partnership—just make sure your brand parable resonates with your brand tone.

5. The working edit: Your brand story should constantly evolve in response to your customer experience. Listen to her criticism and implement appropriate change.

It's About the Consumer, Not You

BeautyMatter (New York, NY): Kelly Kovack, founder & CEO

I have known Kovack for a number of years and did some branding work with her for Alchimie Forever a number of years ago. Many of the lessons I shared above I learned from and with her.

1. A brand story comprises more than words. To effectively communicate your brand story you must be able to do so with images. Crafting a visual vocabulary is equally important as the words you choose.

2. More is just more. Be concise and clear, not only your thoughts but in the execution.

"The most common mistake I see in marketing is businesses being narcissistic," said Imaginal Marketing Group owner and creative director, Kathleen Turpel.

3. A brand story should not be a monologue. Remember, it's about the consumer, not you. Why should they care about your brand? What are you going to do for them?

Tell the "Why" Story

Imaginal Marketing Group (New Orleans, LA): Kathleen Turpel, owner and creative director

Turpel's expertise is on the hair side of the industry, as she works mostly with salons—an interesting perspective if you are creating a service (intangible) brand versus a product (tangible) brand. Her rules for effective branding are:

1. Be focused on your customer: The most common mistake I see in marketing is businesses being narcissistic. They are so consumed with telling everyone how great they are that they bore their audience. The

best brands tell the "why" story. When you are selling solutions to problems—marketing is effortless.

2. Be true: Don't use BS phrases and advertising lingo. If you have heard it before, find another way to say what you mean. (I wanted to use the word authentic, but I think that word makes us all a little nauseous now.)

3. Be positive: Stay away from cutting others down—you can always flip a negative into a positive. You want your brand to be associated with positive feelings.

4. Be brave: Have the courage to be yourself and be different. I think business owners need to be courageous, because inevitably the trolls on social media will appear. Keep your head high, your words positive, and meet them head on.

5. Be funny or profound: Make your audience laugh or cry. But make sure you don't lose sight of telling your why, just for the sake of the emotion. You need both. ■

LET'S START A CONVERSATION

This marks the first of a series of articles on beauty brand building that I will be writing for *Global Cosmetic Industry*. Throughout the year, I will cover topics ranging from branding to manufacturing to distribution and financing. I will be sharing my own experience in building Alchimie Forever, my family's Swiss skin care brand, and reaching out to my network of other beauty brand owners, advisers and professionals in the industry to share their expertise. I look forward to your feedback, and welcome comments and questions at ada@alchimie-forever.com.



ADA POLLA (ada@alchimie-forever.com) is the co-creator of the Swiss antioxidant skin care line, Alchimie Forever, which launched in the U.S. in 2004. Her strategic focus and implementation have yielded double-digit annual revenue growth for the company. Polla holds an MBA from Georgetown University, majored in art history and political science at Harvard University, and graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1999. She is also a *Global Cosmetic Industry* editorial advisor.