

Rethinking Brand

**Shaping the Future instead of
merely passing it on.**

spiritforbrands.

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**Shaping the Future instead of merely
passing it on**

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Many companies treat their brand like a precious heirloom – something to preserve rather than to evolve. But those seeking to shape the future must understand their brand as a living system that continually renews itself through the interplay of leadership, culture, and strategy. Especially during generational transitions, it becomes clear whether a brand remains a source of relevance or turns into a relic. This whitepaper explores how companies can actively drive transformation through a clear “why”, a sharpened “what”, and a lived “how” – creating brands that provide direction, foster innovation, and build lasting resonance.

Courage to Renew!

Many companies treat their brand like a precious heirloom: carefully guarded, strictly maintained, and kept as unchanged as possible. Yet, brands must continuously evolve – particularly during leadership transitions. At such pivotal moments, not only the dynamics of the market environment, emerging technologies, and shifting customer needs come into play, but also the company itself – from its structures and processes to its culture and leadership. A brand that is merely handed down without actively responding to internal transformation and external impulses inevitably loses its vitality and radiance.

Our experience shows: relevance cannot simply be passed on. Every new generation of leaders and employees must redefine it – in dialogue with changing markets, technological advances, and customer expectations, as well as with evolving organizational structures and leadership models. Authenticity does not mean stagnation; loyalty to the brand's core must not inhibit innovation. Leadership means thinking ahead. Brands need creators, not caretakers.

Those who want to shape this transformation need more than isolated measures. *Rethinking brand is an integrated principle that unites three closely connected perspectives* – and becomes especially critical when both the market and leadership are in flux.

At its core stands the “Why” – the overarching purpose and future reason for the brand's existence. Especially during a generational shift, it is essential to redefine what the brand will stand for in a rapidly changing environment. Only then robust future scenarios can emerge; visions of how business models, audiences, and technologies might evolve over the next five to ten years – an indispensable foundation for investment and innovation.

Next comes the “What” – the continuous renewal of the brand's essence. A leadership transition offers the opportunity to reassess and sharpen the brand's value proposition, ensuring that it remains relevant in a changing landscape: What role will it play for its audiences? Which problem will it solve better than others?

Finally, the “How” – the way in which mindset and values are embodied in leadership, culture, and ways of working. Only when new leaders model transformation and when structures encourage learning and experimentation can the organization successfully navigate both internal and external change.

In this way, a generational transition becomes the starting point for continuous renewal – turning a brand into a living system that actively shapes its own future.

Three Strategic Action Fields for Companies

Companies that consistently apply these three perspectives — clarifying the ‘Why’ with robust visions for the future, sharpening the ‘What’ through continuous renewal of the brand’s core, and strengthening the ‘How’ by enabling the organization — lay the foundation for lasting brand strength. However, to translate these strategic principles into tangible results, companies need targeted levers for practical implementation. We recommend three action fields that connect brand strategy, leadership, and culture – all aligned toward sustainable value creation:

1. Co-Creating (and Redefining) Strategy

- **Shape leadership responsibility with strategic intent:**
Whether it’s a generational transition, a management restructure, or shifting market dynamics, any change at the top must be reflected in the brand strategy.
- **Define future scenarios and purpose:**
(Re)develop vision, mission, and purpose through a collaborative process to clarify the brand’s overarching reason for being.
- **Develop next-generation leadership:**
Prepare emerging leaders and key talents for new responsibilities to guide the brand and organization confidently through internal and external change.

2. Preserving the Core – and Evolving the Brand

- **Clarify core and context:**
Define with precision what constitutes the immutable essence of the brand – and when adaptation to new market conditions, technologies, and audiences is essential.
- **Renew the narrative:**
Evolve the brand story to provide internal orientation while resonating externally with changing markets and new generations of customers.
- **Advance design and communication:**
Modernize the brand’s visual and verbal identity to reflect cultural transformation within the organization while responding to external developments.

3. Future-Proofing Culture

- **Derive and anchor values:**
Translate vision and mission into shared values and desired behaviors – bringing them to life in everyday practice.
- **Strengthen a culture of learning and innovation:**
Establish structures that foster experimentation, enable learning from experience, and help the organization quickly absorb new impulses.
- **Empower the organization:**
Design responsibilities and decision-making processes that keep the organization close to the market and make agility a natural part of its DNA.

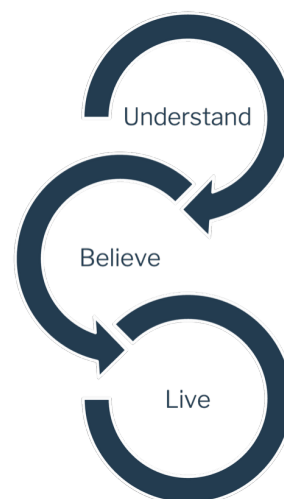
Together, these three areas form the core of a sustainable transformation process – one that not only protects the brand but also enhances its relevance and radiance.

Culture First – Embedding transformation within the organization

Those who consistently pursue the three action areas soon realize that without a lived culture, every strategy remains theoretical. Rethinking brand only succeeds when the organization itself becomes the driving force. **That's why we say: Culture first – strong brands grow from within.** Before a brand can shine outward, it must be understood, believed, and lived internally. Brand work therefore requires a three-step internal process of cultural anchoring:

1. **Understand** – Communicate and explain the vision, mission, and brand essence across the organization.
2. **Believe** – Build conviction so that the brand and its values guide all decisions.
3. **Live** – Make values and desired behaviors visible and tangible in everyday practice.

Only when everyone in the organization follows this path can the brand remain credible and effective in the world outside.





Summary

Rethinking brand means not waiting for market shifts or internal disruptions to force you into action – but taking the lead in shaping change yourself. Change is inevitable, especially during generational transitions. The real question is whether you let it happen or actively steer it.

Brand is a central instrument of management and leadership – far more than a name, a logo, or a communication tool. When understood strategically, it secures relevance, empowers people and organizations, and drives growth – not as an add-on, but as an integrating force that connects all parts of the business.

Our message: Brands are not an inheritance. Brands are a responsibility.

So don't wait for markets, technologies, or internal changes to compel you to act. Shape the future proactively – with the brand as both compass and engine. In doing so, every transformation – whether driven by growth, strategic realignment, new technologies, or leadership change – becomes a new beginning. The brand becomes a living system that stays relevant for the future.



Spirit for Brands itself embodies the principles outlined in this whitepaper. With the handover of sole operational responsibility to Alexander Rauch and Walter Brecht's new role as Senior Advisor, we have fulfilled our own brand promise: to actively shape transformation.

This step generates new energy for the next generation — not only in leadership, but across the entire team. It drives the continued evolution of our services and strengthens our collective capacity for innovation. It proves that brands should not be inherited, but continuously reimaged.

Our own journey shows that rethinking brand works — and that it's worth it. If you see your brand as a driver of the future, you can harness this same power. Don't walk this path alone. Let's take the next step together — with clarity for your strategy, depth for your identity, and energy for a culture that makes the future possible.

Let's keep shaping your brand – together.

*Fig.: NextGen Spirit of Spirit for Brands;
Picture: left Alexander Rauch, right Walter Brecht*

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Spirit for Brands is an internationally active boutique consultancy specializing in brand and marketing strategy – and a leading expert in this field. We work with companies across industries and regions to identify their challenges and opportunities in marketing and brand management. In doing so, we help our clients leverage the full potential of their brands to create value and drive growth.

Founded in 2014, we have since supported numerous companies and brands in achieving additional competitive advantages and delivering sustainable, positive results.

For more information, please visit us at:
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passion for values