

# Kinetic Branding

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**L**ate at night, you lie awake and stare at the ceiling, worrying. You're thinking about achieving growth — dramatic growth — of your customer base, of your brands, of your top-line revenues. You're awake because you think achieving dramatic growth is fraught with risk, and you know that those unwilling to take risks are pushed aside by competitors with the ambition, skill and courage to uncover and capture transformational opportunities.

Too many marketers overlook the most powerful source of those opportunities — one that's right at their fingertips — their brand's existing equity. Rushing into re-positioning, these marketers risk sacrificing the brand equity they've worked to build, throwing their organization into an identity crisis and confusing the consumers they were hoping to attract. Providing a framework that helps marketers avoid this mistake is what *kinetic branding* is all about.

## Kinetic Branding

Remember, in physics class, when a drawn bow-and-arrow was given as an example of potential energy? The bow stores energy based on its position, ready to spring into action. When the bow is released, potential energy becomes kinetic energy and the arrow rockets skyward.

Like that drawn bow, your brand has potential energy based on its current equity — strength that, if brought to life

the right way, can be converted to kinetic energy to propel your business to new heights. *Kinetic branding* uncovers opportunities for you to re-interpret and expand your brand's current equity to release its potential energy, without the risk of traditional repositioning.

Repositioning, by definition, moves your brand from 'A' to 'B' — its message is, "We're not 'A', we're 'B'." Let's take a closer look at this time-honored strategy.

**Look at your brand's current equity as part of the solution, not part of the problem.**

Clearly, you have customers who value your brand for its current positioning — if you didn't, you wouldn't have a brand in the first place! When you tell a customer who values you for 'A' that you're not 'A' anymore, you've put that customer at dire risk. Traditional re-positioning is a huge, often unnecessary, bet that the incremental revenue gained by the new positioning will more than make up for the lost revenue it causes. Re-positioning begins in the red.

The message of *kinetic branding* is, "The equities makes us great at 'A', also make us great at 'B'." Because it builds

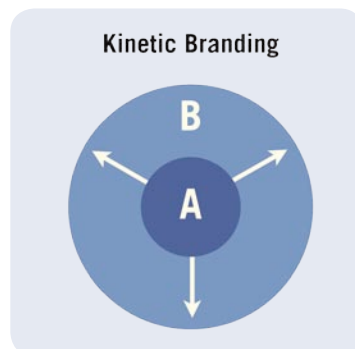
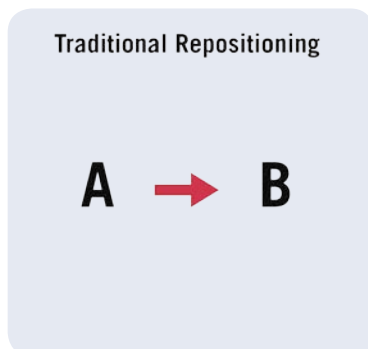
around the core of your current equity, *kinetic branding* expands your brand's relevance while strengthening its existing equity. It builds on your brand's strengths rather than sacrificing them at the altar of re-positioning. *Kinetic branding* gives you the benefits of repositioning without the risk.

The best way to bring this approach to life is by using an example of a brand that captured its power. That brand is UPS.

*Kinetic branding* begins by answering four key questions.

**1. Business Dynamics:** What are the forces shaping the future of your category? Consolidation, increased competition, an emerging opportunity, a category trend — anything that helps define the future of your business and focus your brand's efforts, qualifies. For UPS, the business dynamics focused on the emerging opportunity in supply chain management. UPS sized the business opportunity in supply chain management at a staggering \$3 trillion. And they set the company's sights on expanding the brand's reach to capture that opportunity.

**2. Current Equity:** What is your brand known and respected for, today? Your current equity is the starting point for identifying your brand's potential energy. Consumer research revealed UPS's current equity as the world's best ground-package shipper, hands down. It represented the lion's share of UPS's \$30+ billion in revenue. Unfortunately, ground shipping wasn't a high-growth business and UPS already enjoyed upwards of 70 percent





BRAND COMPETENCY  
Operational efficiency

CURRENT EQUITY  
Ground package  
delivery



CONSUMER INSIGHT  
Emotional connection  
to “Brown”

BUSINESS DYNAMICS  
\$3 trillion opportunity in supply  
chain management

market share in the U.S. As UPS pursued the upside of supply-chain management, it was imperative that the company maintain its strength in ground shipping.

**3. Consumer Insight:** What do you know about consumers that can help you connect with them in a meaningful way? Unmet needs, aspirations, cultural trends, emotional affinity for your brand — any consumer knowledge that you can use as you bring your expanded brand to life answers this question. For UPS, the consumer insight was the incredibly strong emotional affinity for its identification with the color “brown.” Brown symbolized everything customers loved about UPS — a down-to-earth, get-it-done attitude that separated UPS from competitors. The challenge was preserving that equity while energizing the icon of “brown” to stretch the brand into new territory.

**4. Brand Competency:** What is the ownable, credible and extendable re-interpretation of your current equity? With its network of more than 300,000 people, 88,000 trucks and the world’s 11th largest airline, UPS is arguably the most operationally efficient company on earth. For UPS, the brand competency of operational efficiency was ownable: No other brand could claim the kind of operational efficiency that UPS could. It was credible: Customers easily granted UPS leadership in operational efficiency.

And it was extendable: Research showed that when the link between operational efficiency and supply chain management was made, the customer re-

sponse was overwhelming: “The same operational efficiency that makes UPS great at ground shipping should make them a power in supply-chain management. I just never thought of them that way.” Ground shipping and supply-chain management each require the same brand competency. Customers and prospects simply hadn’t made the connection. *Kinetic branding* helped them make it.

### Articulating the Opportunity

The answers to the four questions are means to an end: they articulate the best opportunity to grow your brand and your business dramatically. We’ve found the opportunity for nearly every brand lies in one of four areas.

**1. Business Definition:** By changing the definition of its business from ground-package shipping to enabling global commerce, UPS expanded its role in the business lives of its customers. They began to think of UPS as not only a stronger player in the ground shipping business, but as a force in supply-chain management.

**2. Category Dynamics:** GEICO Insurance fundamentally shifted the way insurance is bought and sold by appealing to a growing segment of consumers who don’t want to pay the additional overhead cost of traditional insurance agents. By focusing on their brand competency of direct insurance, GEICO used a *kinetic branding* approach to change the dynamics of their category.

**3. Target Definition:** The current campaign for Miller Genuine Draft specifically targets drinkers over 30-years old, based

on MGD’s Brand Competency of full-bodied taste. That new target definition allows MGD to focus on a differentiating product attribute with a target audience most likely to be drawn to it.

**4. Consumer Perceptions:** Hanes apparel recognized its equity in the advertising line, “Wait ‘til we get our Hanes on you.” By updating the look and feel of the ads, using timely celebrities and evolving the line to, “Look who we’ve got our Hanes on now,” the brand was able to reach back into the consumers’ well of positive equity and update its image at the same time. That’s a *kinetic branding* recipe for changing consumer perceptions.

*Kinetic branding* reminds marketers that the key to their brand’s future growth may be closer than they think. Unlike traditional repositioning, *kinetic branding* looks at a brand’s current equity as part of the solution, not part of the problem. And it gives you an alternative to the often unnecessary — and always costly — either/or choice between current equity and new opportunities.

Try it, and like UPS, Miller Genuine Draft, GEICO and Hanes — who’ve used the power of *kinetic branding* — you just might have your first good night’s sleep in a long, long time. ■

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agencies in London, Stockholm, Frankfurt and the U.S., and has managed strategy on EFFIE-winning campaigns for UPS, Signet Bank, Bank One and GEICO Auto Insurance. Matt holds a degree in marketing from the College of William & Mary and an MBA from The Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University and is a contributing author of the book, *Kellogg On Branding*. He can be reached at [matt.williams@martinagency.com](mailto:matt.williams@martinagency.com) or 804.698.8000.