

BREAK- ING BRAND

Written by

Meg Beckum, Executive Creative Director at Elmwood

Derek Stewart, Chief Strategy Officer at Stein IAS

STEIN
IAS

elmwood
NEW YORK

B2B BRANDS NEED TO BREAK WITH BRAND DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES OF THE PAST.

Stop thinking about brand in isolation and start thinking about brand as 'future demand'.

Historically, brand in B2B has been either an after-thought or thought of in a one-dimensional fashion: that is, with corporate brand strategy giving rise to brand design developed in isolation of the full needs of a business over time. Today, the need for a more robust, multidimensional approach to brand in B2B - connecting brand development to internal and in-market activation - is paramount.

Whether refreshing, re-positioning, transforming, or originating brands, B2B marketers must develop their brands from the outset with all the necessary audience connections and outcomes in mind. Brand strategy and design must connect with all the needs of the business downstream. Brand origination must connect from the very start with brand activation and brand-to-demand marketing across lines of business and geographies. That's how brand progression drives growth.

“ *As we embarked on our first brand refresh in some time, we faced the challenge of educating internal stakeholders that this was not a design exercise, or even a strategy and design exercise. And it certainly was far more than a new logo and color palette. In a fast-changing global market, we needed to transform how we think about ourselves, how our customers think about us, and how all our stakeholder communities engage with us.*

From the very start of the process, we had to have long-term brand activation in play. And we had to have strategies in place to connect brand to demand at every level - master brand, business units, solution brands, vertical markets - across all geographies.

Recently stated by the CMO of a multi-billion-dollar industrial brand.

**B2BS ARE
THE WORLD'S
HARDEST-
WORKING
BUSINESSES.
AND BRAND
IN B2B MUST
WORK HARDER
AS A RESULT.**

Clearly, brand in B2B has a bigger job to do than ever before. That's why it's vital to change how brand and the role of brand are viewed. We can no longer afford to think of brand abstracted from the 'on the ground' need to spearhead growth.

According to strategist and author James Hurman (writing in this white paper from WARC), building brand is crucial to maintaining what he terms 'future demand'. In his view, brand-building (broad reach, building emotional connection) should be considered as the creation of future demand, ensuring that customers who are not yet in market for a given product or solution are aware of a brand as they do enter a buying cycle and immediately add it to their consideration set.

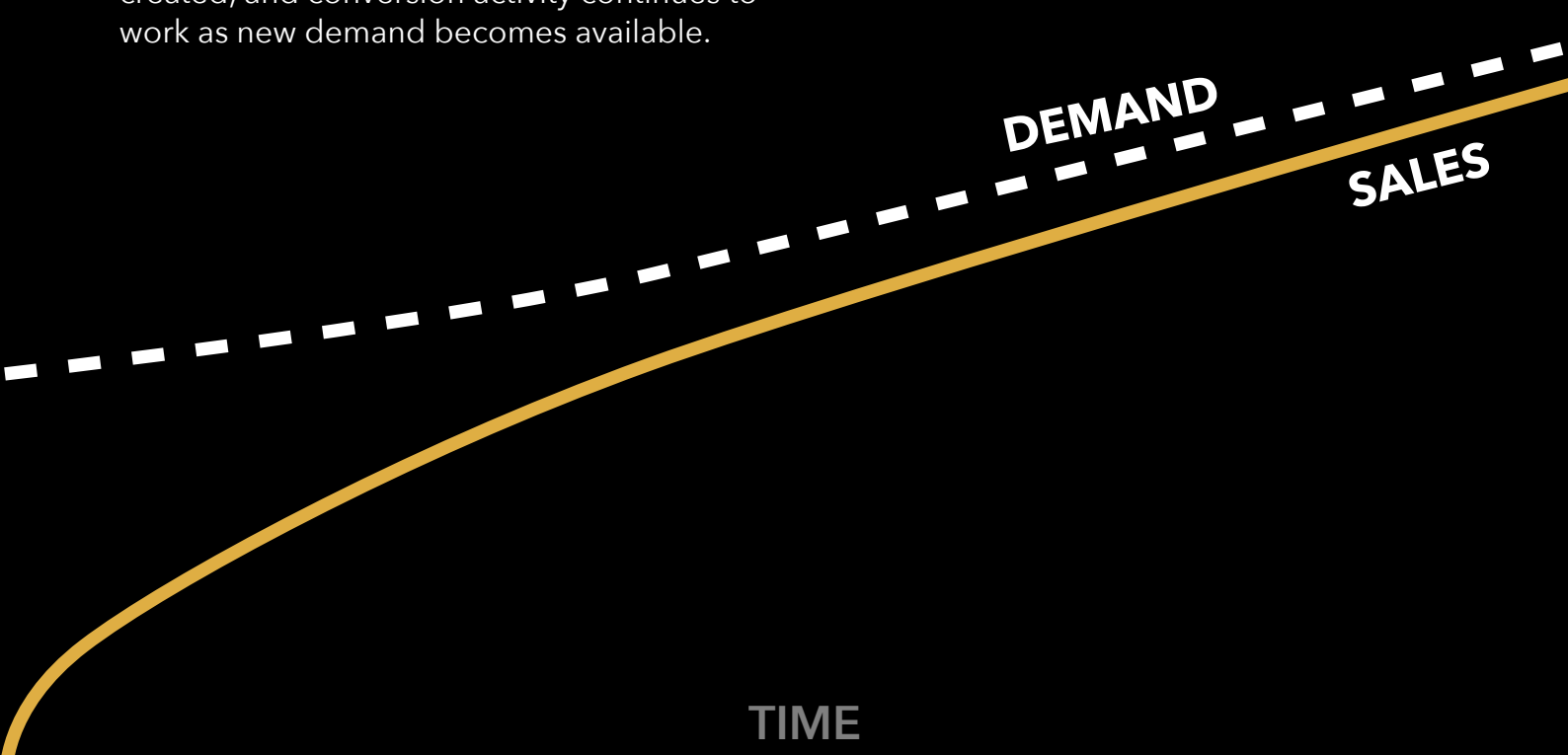
According to Hurman, reframing brand building as *'future demand'* has the attendant benefit of being *"much more commercially comprehensible than the fluffy idea of 'brand building', which is often met with suspicion from senior non-marketing stakeholders."*

Hurman, Mark Ritson, Les Binet, Peter Field, WARC, and The B2B Institute have all contributed to this brand-as-future-demand thread. They and many others see the job of brand as:

- **Converting Existing Demand** by tightly targeting those 'in the market' with rational messaging that drives choice.
- **Creating Future Demand** by targeting broader audiences of 'all category buyers' with emotional, multisensorial messaging that stands out and creates positive brand 'memories' that influence future purchase decisions.

Consistent future demand creation

Future demand is consistently built over time, demand is converted at a sustainable rate as it's created, and conversion activity continues to work as new demand becomes available.



FOR B2B BRANDS TODAY, THERE'S EVEN MORE TO BE AWARE OF AND TAKE OWNERSHIP OF.

“ *The past is a foreign country;
they do things differently there.*

Wrote L.P Hartley in his novel 'The Go Between'. This statement captures the challenge facing B2B brands, their custodians, and their agencies. Put simply, brands and marketers cannot consider and address brand as they used to.

In today's world, more influence lies with external forces than ever before. So, it's crucial that brands recognize that they are living and breathing organisms. They create business value not in and of themselves, but in the hearts and minds of colleagues and customers first and foremost, and of competitors, stakeholders, influencers, supporters, detractors, and protesters. From the outset, marketers must be cognizant of all the inevitable spaces in which their brands will play, and how in each of those spaces there is the basis for a win every time.

As previously stated, brand strategy and design must connect with all the needs of the business downstream. Only with this mindset - and only with the necessarily hard-working brand messaging houses, design systems and campaign frameworks - can brands be built to stand up to the challenges and opportunities this ever-more-connected world presents.

STOP THINKING ABOUT BRAND IN ISOLATION.

RECOGNIZE THAT BRAND IS FUTURE DEMAND.

Foresee and develop the harder-working brand systems that address all internal and external requirements. Stein IAS has long held the belief that a brand is the sum of its contact, so each contact must be considered and managed consistently, seamlessly, based on the single most important thing it stands for.

At any point in the context of brand development - be that foundation strategy, naming, brand idea development, design development, launch, evolution - work can and often will be carried out in respective stages. But the subsequent roles and context must always serve as the true north.

Pause for a reality check here. Historically, brand consultancies don't do or even contemplate demand. And marcomms agencies can't do brand (though almost all will claim they do). Try to bring two separate practitioners together? Not a hope; varying philosophies, agendas and scrambled scope get in the way of that ever working.

STEIN IAS & ELMWOOD

This is where Stein IAS and Elmwood working together comes into the equation.

Stein IAS is the first and leading brand-to-demand activation agency for B2B enterprises worldwide. Sibling MSQ agency Elmwood is a leader in global brand design capability. Each offers world-class expertise in each area, but the unique differentiator here is that both are part of the independent agency group MSQ.

So, both work together seamlessly for the common good of B2B brands. Taking away inherent conflict that stymies other attempts at collaborations, they have launched a new, joined-up brand strategy, design and activation offering, from internal to external and from brands to demand. Putting together world-class brand development and activation capabilities - rooted in 50 years of deep B2B expertise - they bring a new and necessary approach to developing unbroken brands.

This new offering is the answer that the market needs, providing the deeper strategic insights that turn business complexity into human clarity and relatability. That crafts meaningful, memorable, thought-through design systems that differentiate, anticipate, and address all the needs of an enterprise. That results in hard-working, no bullshit, detailed and rigorous results.

The key thing here is to recognize that brand development isn't the end of the journey, but rather just the beginning; defining the most fertile foundation to differentiate an enterprise at the brand level while uniquely ensuring it is set up to optimize impact across the inevitable launch, awareness, and demand generation work that B2B brand success can't do without.



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WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE BRAND AND BUSINESS?

There is the value inherent in one agency offering taking care of everything: driving greater day-to-day efficiency with fewer agencies and stakeholders to deal with; ensuring more seamless delivery; and maximizing ROI at each stage. It ensures that a seamless employee and customer experience is delivered across all funnel stages, ensuring greater brand impact across the board and over time.

Simply, B2B businesses can no longer afford to think of their brands in isolation. It's time for a holistic approach that recognizes that brand is future demand. For those that don't, put simply, they're breaking their brand.

CONTACT US

elmwood
NEW YORK

J. Nulty White

Managing Director,
Elmwood NYC

+1347.819.1771

nulty.white@elmwood.com

**STEIN
IAS**

Craig Duxbury

Global Client Services Director

craig.duxbury@steinias.com

+44 (0) 7796 681572

+44 (0) 1625 578 578

Clarence Mill, Clarence Road,
Bollington, SK10 5JZ

Jeremy Cochran

President, Americas

jeremy.cochran@steinias.com

(+1) 212-213-1112

(+1) 917-594-0105

71 Fifth Avenue, 8th Floor,
New York, NY 10003