

Inside Out Branding™

Living the Brand so Creativity and Innovation can Thrive

Creating loyal, engaged employees who can AND will go beyond and can be creative and innovative. Everyone seems to be talking about having an engaged workforce who can be more innovative yet it can't just be turned on like a light switch from off to on. It takes a lot more than to turn the light of innovation on. However, when that switch is on, it is exciting for everyone involved. There are remarkably few really good examples of organizations that have been effective at achieving this distinction of being both effective at innovation throughout their company in how they operate and how they deliver their products and services. GE, Google, Apple, Southwest, and the Four Seasons spring to mind, and maybe a small handful of others; otherwise, there's a lot of noise in a cluttered marketplace where organizations are not walking the talk. One way to gauge this is to understand what the inside brand is like at an organization. Are employees living your brand, and what exactly does that mean in terms of systems, structures and communications?

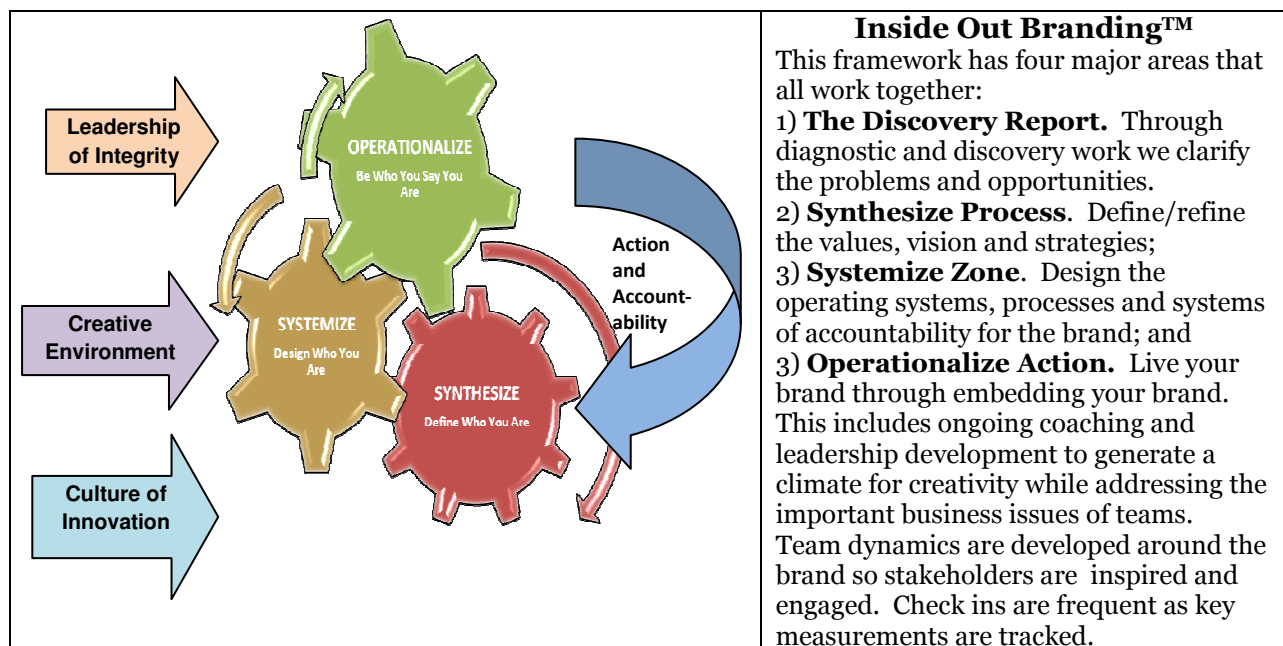
The inconvenient truth is you already have some sort of inside brand whether you've worked on it or not. Your inside brand is the sum total of what employees and stakeholders are saying about your company, how they think of you as an employer and the relationship they feel they have with the company.

Actively working on your inside brand and engaging people in this conversation is not optional today if you are committed to creating a space for innovation and creativity to thrive. It doesn't have to be complex or expensive either. But it does pay enormous dividends. In May 2005, *Harvard Business Review* published an article by Neeli and Venkat Bendapudi entitled *Creating the Living Brand*. In their research, the authors profiled two regional convenience store companies who broke the stereotype, showing that any company can deliver outstanding customer service—even convenience stores, where low pay and high turnover supposedly make service a problem. The secret: generating a bond between employees and the brand and the structures for them to be innovative.

We have a lot to say on the subject so we are sharing this particular story about one of our clients who we have worked extensively with in 2008 to transform their company.

“We completed 2008 with some of the strongest results in our 30 year company history. We had a 10% increase in sales and a 200% increase in profitability from 2007. I am very sure that we would not have survived this economic downturn if it wasn't for the work we did throughout 2008 with Velocity Partnership. We have a clear sense of purpose and vision, we have the right team, and we understand the kind of people we need for continued business success.” Audrey Partridge, Juergen Partridge Limited.

Velocity Partnership began working with Juergen Partridge Limited (JPL) in early January 2008. While financial results were important for Juergen and Audrey Partridge, they had some other priorities for the year ahead. They wanted to ensure that every employee at their 30 year old company was proud to work there and wear the company brand. They also wanted to have their employees take on more responsibility and be more creative in the day to day operations. And ultimately they wanted to see if it would ever be possible to slowly move out of the day to day operations of the company. At this time they were both resigned and beaten up by their year in 2007. Client breakdowns were more frequent, margins were down, employees were feeling burnt out and they both felt disillusioned about a business that began from a passion for architectural landscape and design. These business challenges had taken their toll on the leadership of a business that had produced award winning architectural landscape design.



From the gaps that were identified from a number of conversations with the Partridges it was clear that Velocity’s Inside Out Branding™ framework was going to be the right approach to address those gaps. Audrey and Juergen Partridge had presented many challenges and gaps that the company faced, however the picture became clearer as Velocity Partnership interviewed each employee. We did a lot of digging to uncover challenges and opportunities that weren’t being taken advantage of because so much daily ‘fire fighting’ was going on. The **Discovery Report** is the first stage of Inside Out Branding™ which really clarifies what is going on. This included using the Organizational Climate Survey and the ProfileXT. The questions and the answers provided for the Organizational Climate Survey opened up some rich, candid dialogue about what was needed, and also demonstrated how engaged each employee was in the delivery of the company’s brand. This Survey gave a good quantitative and qualitative measurement of how the organization was doing in some very important areas regarding communication and

structures. Each team member also completed the ProfileXT. The PXT created some real ‘aha’ moments for everyone as they got to see and hear about themselves in a whole new and different way. The debrief from the PXT gave everyone a chance to see the similarities and differences in the team and how that had affected how work gets done in the office and the company’s working environment.

Once all of the information was gathered and reviewed from the *Discovery Report*, the key learnings and opportunities were explored and discussed with the whole company. This was the **Synthesizing Process** that explored areas like service delivery, brand experience consistency, internal management structures, managing the creative force of Juergen Partridge himself, and communication effectiveness. This company-wide working session allowed for total transparency from the individual to the collective organizational whole. It also produced a clear set of strategies, detailed action items and a detailed timeline to move forward. The PXTs also helped to identify who would be the best to manage and execute this initiative. Having Audrey Partridge, the hard working, tenacious and persistent co-owner of the company fully championing the execution of this process made this turnaround fully possible.

After another round of working sessions, Juergen Partridge Limited was able to put the game plan (**Systemizing Zone**) together to address how they needed to design their systems and structures internally to support the effective execution of their brand experience with clients. This was an intensive stage that could only have occurred with leadership that was prepared to be very honest with themselves like JPL was. It also became much clearer where some people in the organization may be part of the problem. With the support of coaching this company had the necessary conversations with team members to either move them into a role that most suited their best ability, or if the individual was not willing to take on the change, eventually they either left or were let go. At this time JPL also put the whole HiringSmart portal in place to start to recruit and hire more effectively.

The focus on **Operationalizing** all of the needed change was constantly being balanced with how much change the team could take on and that the new systems added value when executed. Of utmost priority was the communication throughout. There were more formal meetings to open up the lines of communication and Velocity Partnership continued to facilitate working sessions to create another channel to ensure the team knew why and what was next and how they could continue to contribute their own creative energy.

By year end, JPL was ecstatic with the results they achieved both on a financial and organizational dynamic level. The economic downturn has had an impact on their business, but Audrey knows that their new way of operating from an Inside Out Branding™ approach has given them the foundation to stay the course in 09. And more importantly, Audrey and Juergen see that in the not too distant future they will be able to transfer even more responsibility of the company to other stakeholders who are coming forth and demonstrating a strong commitment to the future of Juergen Partridge Limited.