

How to Develop Brand Strategy: A Practical Workflow



- Define strategy, positioning, and identity roles and sequence



- Build the brand core before identity and campaign execution



- Learn the end-to-end workflow from research to activation

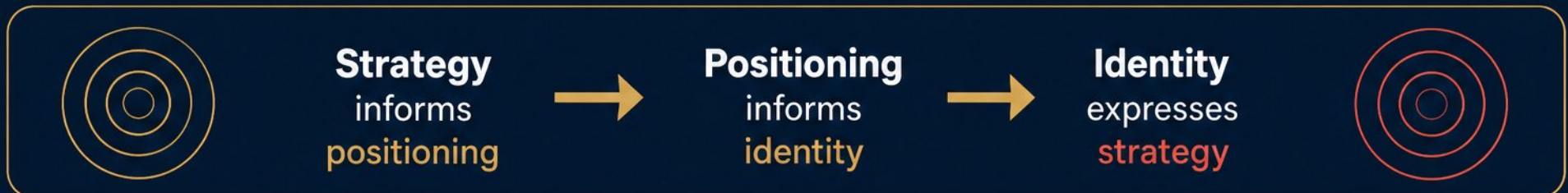


- Avoid common failure modes like identity-first strategy



What Brand Strategy Is and Is Not

	IS	vs.	IS NOT	
	- Brand strategy: decisions on audience, meaning, and meaningful difference			
	- Identity: the visual and verbal system that expresses strategy			
	- Image: what actually forms in the customer's mind			
	- Strategy informs positioning; positioning informs identity; identity expresses strategy			



Start with Business and Customer Reality



- Start from a commercial problem, not a deliverable request



- Collect customer evidence, category dynamics, competitor logic, and internal truth



- Avoid strategy built on founder bias, workshop opinion, or isolated assumptions



- Define 'enough': scope research to the decisions you must make



Gather Customer Evidence That Creates Insight



- Mine interviews, reviews, sales calls, and existing data for real language.



- Ask about actions and costs, not opinions: "What did you do?"



- Look for surprises and contradictions that challenge internal assumptions.



- Structure research around tensions: what people want versus what stops them.



- Keep verbatim quotes to use later in messaging and positioning.

"It works, but it's not solving the real issue."

"We end up doing a lot of manual work around it."

"I was expecting something simpler and more intuitive."

"The handoff between teams is where things fall apart."

"It's hard to get everyone on the same page."

"We tried it, but it didn't stick."

What's the workaround right now?

"If it saved us time, we'd be all in."

Define the Brand Core



- Foundation: purpose, vision, mission, values, personality



- Purpose is timeless "why"; vision is aspirational "where"



- Mission is present "what"; values are non-negotiable principles



- Personality defines how the brand shows up consistently



Identify Audience Segments and Decision Drivers



- Move beyond demographics to needs, jobs, barriers, and motivations



- Surface behavioral and attitudinal profiles, not age-and-income sketches



- Pick the one audience worth prioritizing; write exclusions too



- Record real decision drivers: triggers, objections, alternatives, and switching costs



- Capture verbatim language for later use in messaging and positioning





Analyze the Competitive Landscape



- Map direct, indirect, and status-quo competitors, including the do-nothing option



- Identify category codes, crowded zones, white space, and differentiation opportunities



- Use competitive insight to avoid copying and clarify distinctiveness



- Understand the commercial logic under competitor positioning, not just the surface messaging





Use Positioning Maps to Find Your Space



- Plot brands on two axes that reflect real buyer criteria



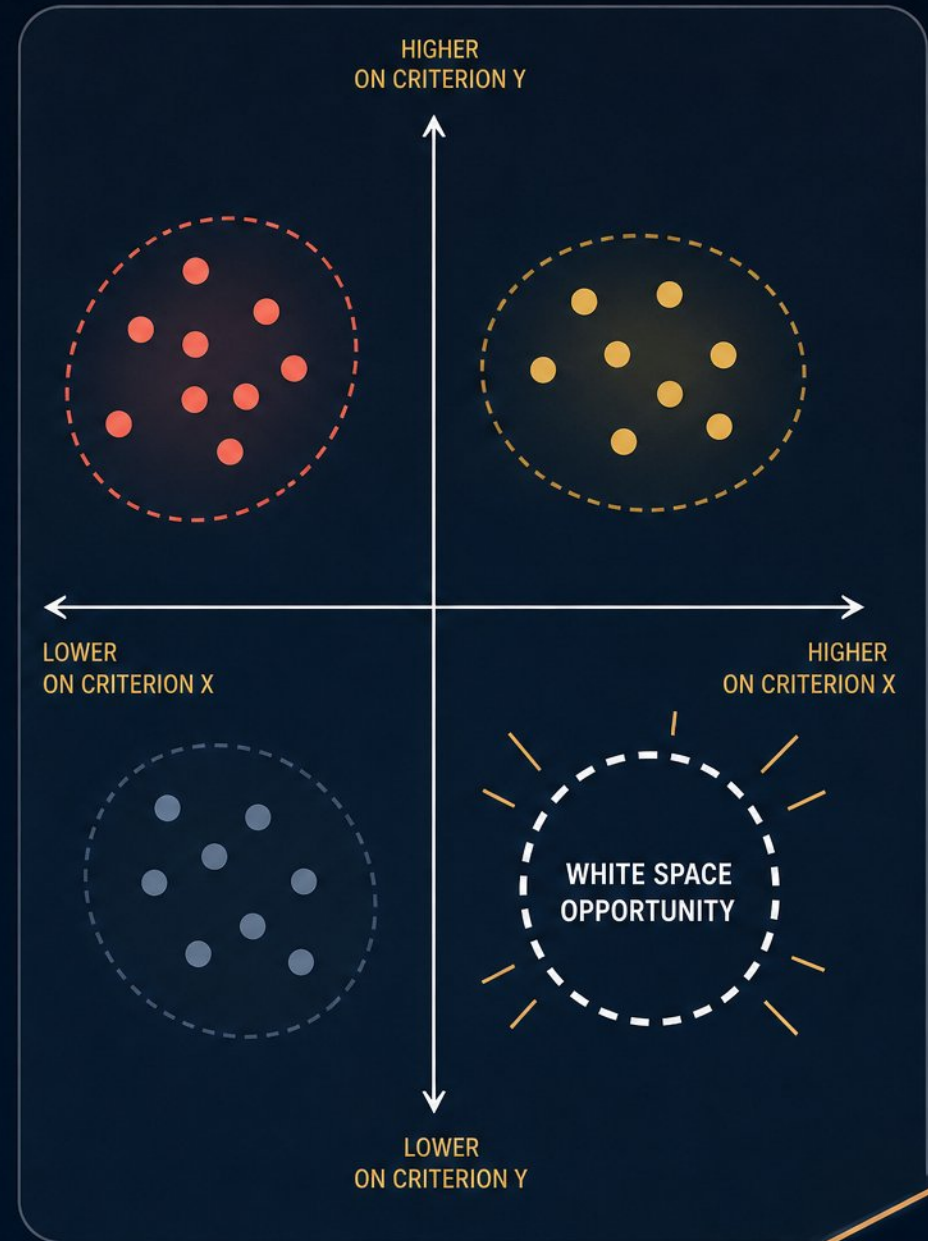
- Use uncorrelated dimensions to reveal genuine market tension



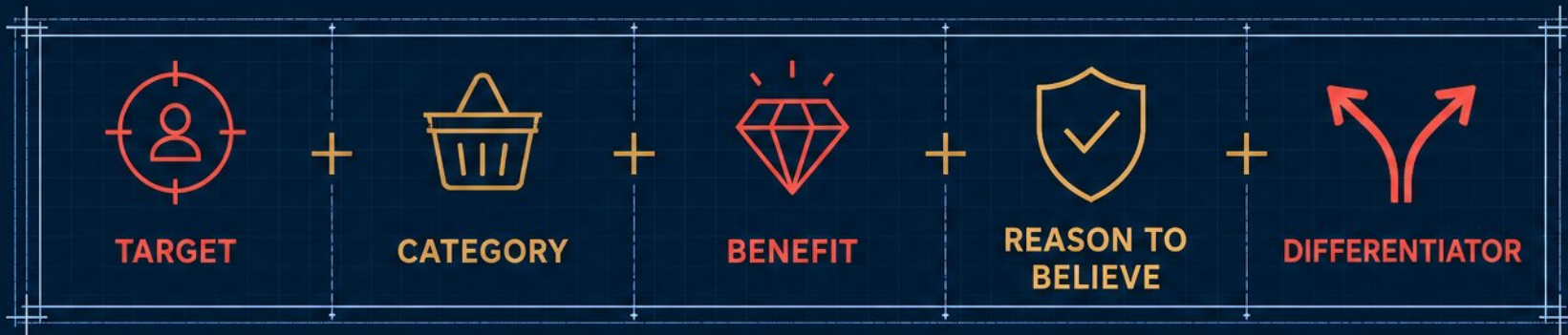
- Read clusters as crowded zones, empty areas as potential gaps



- Validate white space with demand signals, credibility, and commercial viability



Craft a Positioning Statement



- Structure: target, category, benefit, reason to believe, differentiator



- Translate insight into one strategic statement, not a tagline



- Test: credible, distinctive, actionable, commercially relevant



- Avoid broad claims and category-generic language

Develop Message Architecture and Brand Voice



- Core message, key proof points, and recurring story themes



- Use contrast pairs to define voice, not vague adjectives



- A practical framework internal teams and agencies can apply



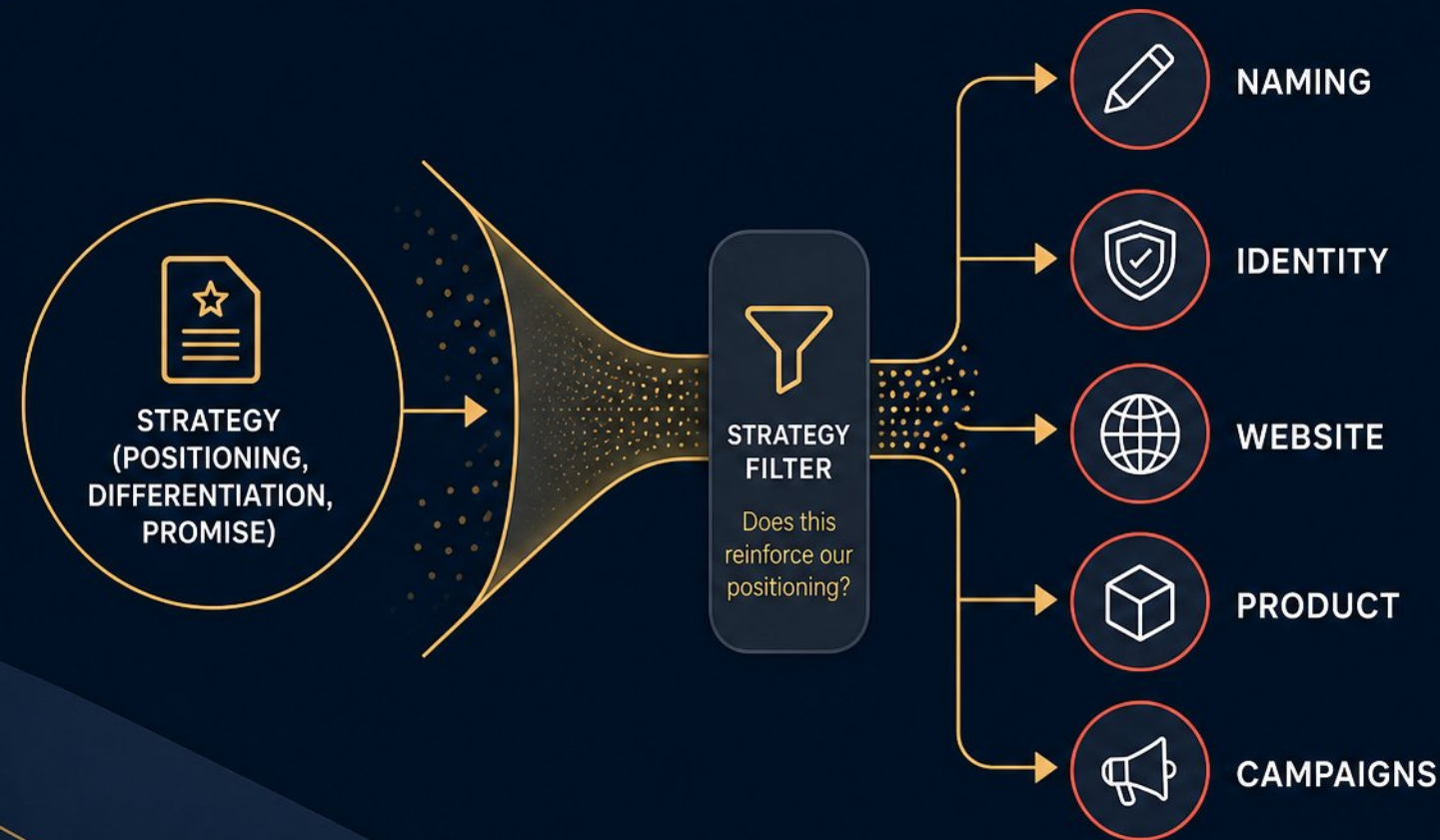
- Adapt messages per audience and channel, keep brand coherence



- Proof points ranked by persuasive power; three to five maximum



Translate Strategy into Activation



- Connect strategy to naming, identity, website, product, and campaigns
- Prioritize high-impact touchpoints that reinforce the positioning
- Use strategy as the filter for concepts, partnerships, and creative work
- Turn the strategy document into a decision-making asset, not a slide archive

Brief Creative Teams from the Strategy



- The brief is the highest-leverage strategy translation document



- Lead with one measurable objective and one audience decision



- Include proof points, constraints, and named decision-makers



- Avoid feature lists, vague claims, and committee mood boards



- Distinguish production partners from strategic partners

CREATIVE BRIEF



OBJECTIVE

One measurable objective



AUDIENCE DECISION

One audience decision



PROOF POINTS

Key evidence that builds belief



CONSTRAINTS

Critical boundaries to respect



DECISION-MAKERS

Who must say yes



PRODUCTION PARTNERS

Execute the work
Bring capabilities to build

VS.



STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Shape the direction
Bring thinking to decide



Run the Workflow: Plan, Facilitate, and Validate



Sequence discovery to final strategy document with clear owners



Frame each agenda block as a forced decision point



Facilitate for outputs and commitment, not polite agreement



Capture verbatim language and log trade-offs as you converge



Stress-test positioning with customers and internal tests before rollout

Operationalize and Maintain the Brand Strategy

- Embed positioning into hiring, product, sales, partnerships, and content decisions
- Use the strategy as a recurring filter with a one-page test
- Review positioning quarterly against customer language and competitive moves
- Diagnose whether the strategy or the execution is failing



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