

LAUNCHING THE LEGACY LAB



CREATING
MODERN
LEGACY

BY

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IN 2012, TWO ICONIC global luxury brands on our agency roster were wrestling with how they would recognize their next significant anniversary. One brand, a leading luxury auto manufacturer, was nearing 25 years. Despite its long list of achievements, the brand wondered whether its age was too young to focus on in a category that tended to reward heritage ahead of modernity. The other brand, a leading luxury hotel company, was going on 30. Despite its accomplishments, questions persisted about whether that was too old in a category that put modernity first. These two brands considered the topic of their legacies in opposite ways. So, which perspective was right?

To resolve the conflict about whether history or modernity matters more, an enterprising group of agency strategists launched a course of study behind a program called the Legacy Lab. The lab began by engaging friends and family around the central topic: What does legacy mean, has the definition evolved, and is it something that still matters? Next, those who heard about the legacy work reached out to volunteer their opinion. In turn, our global network, chiefly Saatchi & Saatchi and Publicis, got actively involved. Motivated by the high response, we moved our internal study external, onto social media. To gain a perspective on brands, we first learned a lot about people.

After we built a good foundation of human insight, we applied knowledge gained in the lab to the ongoing study of brands. More specifically, we started to examine brands with a long history that were thriving, ones that were faltering and those that had failed. We also examined some newer brands, including start-ups, that were thriving in a modern context. Initially, our work was based on secondary research. But, more and more, over the life of our study so far, marketers have become engaged in wanting to share their brand's life story and legacy ambitions. The subject of legacy, as it turns out, is not simply the concern of two of our brands. It is of high interest to many.

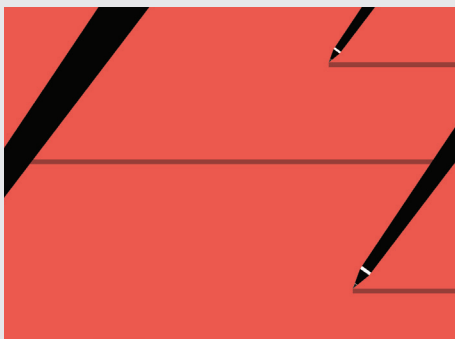
By the time of this writing, we gathered input from more than 900 social media followers, more than 400 survey respondents and 60 one-on-one interviews that included consumers and marketers in more than 20

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countries. Our learning reflects the opinions of multiple generations and cultures from a global set of participants, including senior marketers working across a wide swath of categories: auto, fashion, financial services, food and beverage, hospitality, luxury, not-for-profit, consumer packaged goods, retail, technology, travel and tourism. Our study concludes that neither history nor modernity alone meets the relevance imperative: to create modern legacy in the age of now.

Foundationally, the idea of creating a modern legacy represents a shift. Instead of viewing legacy as something that brands leave behind, this perspective suggests that it is more about the wealth of their experiences reverberating in the world. Instead of seeing legacy as something to be retold from the history books, this new perspective calls for brands to write history every day. Instead of thinking about legacy as something that a brand selects to leave behind, the focus moves to what others select to take away. Instead of equating legacy with artifacts that reflect the past, now what matters most are artifacts that can propel the past forward. What follows is an overview from the lab about those successfully writing history, those helping to pass it on, and the assets they employ to give the past a present and a future: authors, assemblers and artifacts.

LAB LEARNING



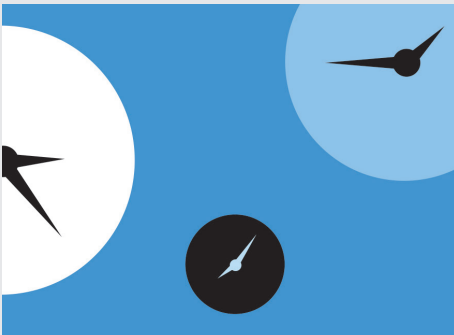
1 Modern Legacy Authors

In the past, it was accepted that legacy brands took pride in being able to recite from their history. Today, modern legacy brands are thriving not by reading from their history but by writing it every day. Through our lab research, we learned that the most vital legacy authors, especially founders, tend to apply five tenets for making sure they persist as vital. These tenets include mobilizing people around a shared purpose, building anticipation by elevating past expectations, giving fans an active role in their story, building mystique by divulging methods, and recognizing loyalists to foster advocacy. Now, as a priority, modern legacy authors remain in the mode of making history.



2 Modern Legacy Assemblers

In the past, it was accepted that legacy brands would write their own story. Today, modern legacy brands are thriving not just because of what they self-author but also because of what their fans take away and pass forward. In our lab, we learned that vital legacy authors connect with three types of assemblers. These types include capturers who preserve a brand's story, continuers who add new pages to a story in the works, and interpreters who adopt and reapply a brand's defining contribution in entirely new spaces and for entirely new audiences. Now, as a rule, modern legacy assemblers are necessary to help authors write stories that stay relevant for generations to come.



3 Modern Legacy Artifacts

In the past, it was expected that legacy brands would produce artifacts that helped to look back—that prompted “remember when” reminiscences. Today, modern legacy brands are thriving not just by helping to look back but also by helping to bring the past forward. Via our lab, we learned that vital legacy authors are creating and co-creating artifacts that exhibit some or all of five new traits. These traits include inspiring people to move ahead, being highly shareable, uniting communities, possessing rare appeal and adapting to the times. Now, modern legacy artifacts no longer only serve to take people back to a point in time but also to continuously propel them onward.

While the principles underlying what it means to create modern legacy—including what it means to be a vital legacy author, assembler and artifact—can feel academic, its applications are not only practical but also essential. Historical brands may survive, but they risk irrelevance over time for people with no attachment to history. Modern brands may be desired, but they risk declining relevance as tastes change. Brands that resolve the paradox, modern legacy brands, don't merely survive or enjoy a short-lived fame, but rather, they inspire loyalty beyond reason, create worth beyond value and build relevance beyond today. Culturally, modern legacy brands earn a lifetime of significance.

Recently, when the Legacy Lab had the opportunity to interview Herve Humler, the President and Chief Operations Officer at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, and one of the brand's founders, we asked what he hoped would be passed forward. His response: “I hope the purpose and values of the brand don't change. But I hope the expressions do. If we don't evolve to reflect the changing priorities of how the Ladies and Gentlemen we serve are living their lives, we won't be living up to our purpose and values.” Inspired by Herve, and by all the learning from our lab, we are pleased to now share excerpts from our findings for those working on creating their own modern legacy.

If you are an interested reader, please look for forthcoming articles on authors, assemblers and artifacts. If you have a related legacy story, please reach out to share with the Legacy Lab team by contacting Team One. ■

“[Modern Legacy Brands] inspire loyalty beyond reason, create worth beyond value and build relevance beyond today.”

Mark Miller is the Chief Strategy Officer at Team One, an ad agency with global expertise and proprietary research in premium categories and aspirational consumers.