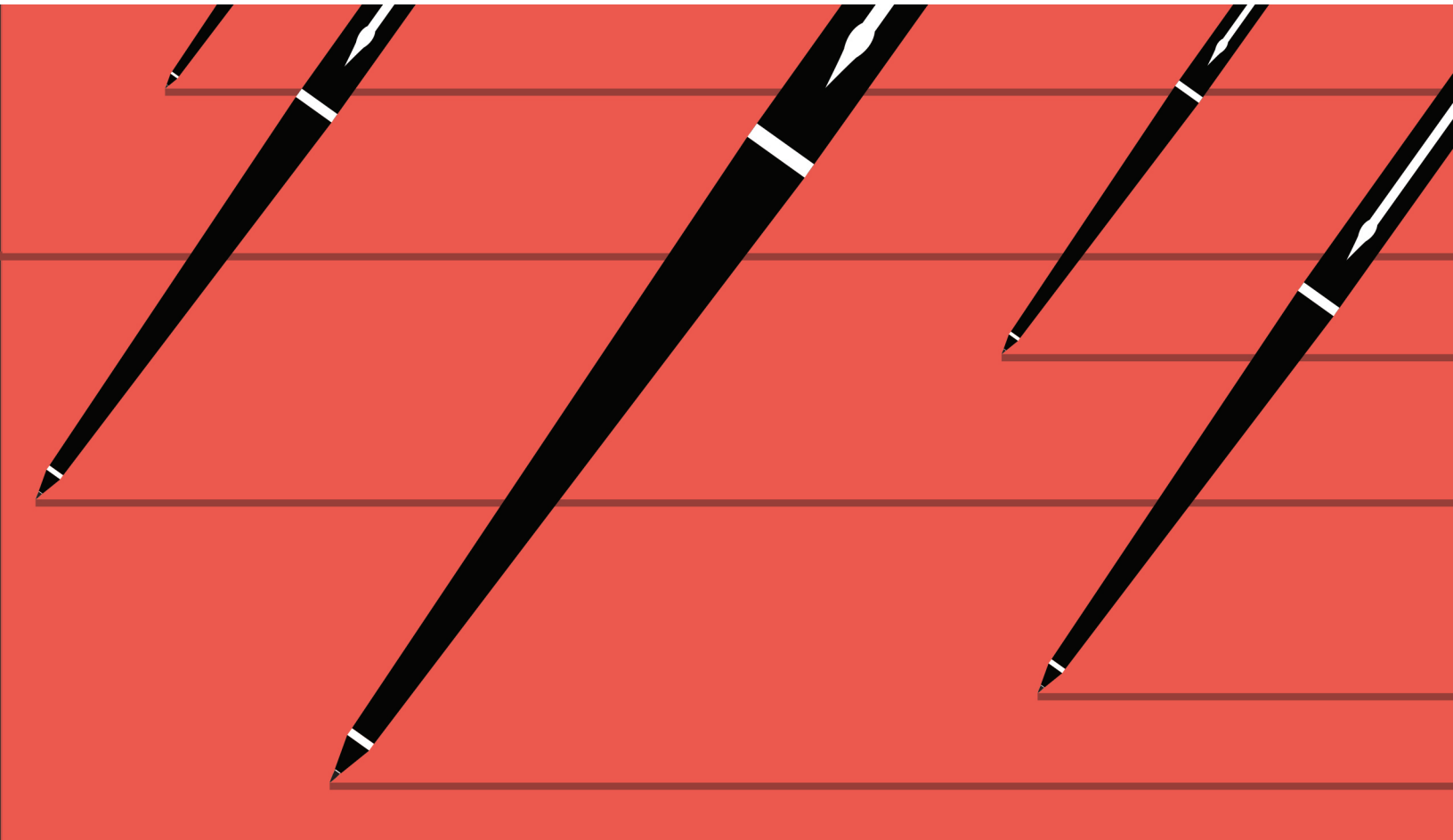


WRITING HISTORY EVERY DAY



CREATING

MODERN

LEGACY

BY

MARK

MILLER

FOR MARKETERS OF brands old and new, the subject of legacy, especially as it relates to the roles of history and tradition in creating a desirable brand, has reemerged as an important conversation. Whereas some believe that having years of heritage persists as an attractive quality, and being enduring is important to achieving iconic brand status, others believe that history can hold them back. Underlying the current debate pitting the historians against the contemporaries is the fact that while some heritage brands that many couldn't have imagined the world without, like Kodak, virtually died during the recession, some more modern brands, like Instagram, have displaced them.

While the two sides stick to their corners, one arguing to preserve the past and the other to revere the future, what too often gets forgotten is the perspective of the people who matter most: the people to whom we are marketing. Of course, heritage brands want to leverage their long histories for competitive advantage. Of course, modern brands want to make history matter less since they can't compete with the past. But how do consumers view history when it comes to brands? Are they drawn to it, or are they more focused on today and tomorrow versus yesterday? One lesson learned from iconic brands like Kodak is that history alone isn't enough to win a lasting patronage.

Given this context—a strong difference of opinion by marketers on the value of legacy for people whose perspective has not been fully considered—our strategy team launched the Legacy Lab. Beginning in 2012, this multigenerational, cross-cultural, ongoing study examines the different aspects of legacy for people consuming in today’s modern world: authoring lasting legacies that matter, assembling legacies that stay vital and creating artifacts that give the past a present and future. Currently, our learning reflects the input of more than 900 social media followers, in addition to more than 400 survey respondents and 60 one-on-one interviews, from more than 20 countries.

Through research, we learned that the question surrounding whether legacies matter for today’s consumers is not precisely right. Why? Because consumers accept that whether they have been around 100 years or one day, whether by design or default, brands, like people, are all building legacies. Legacies can become stale, static or vibrant, but they do stick with us. So, they matter. That said, while consumers respect the past, they are more drawn to brands based on how history manifests in the present day. Therefore, the more precise question to ask is how do we keep history modern and vital? The answer: Make sure brands are purposefully writing their history every day.

Having uncovered that the most vibrant legacies are born from an ethos of continuously writing them, versus constantly reading from them, we also distilled the key tenets that successful legacy writers employ in crafting modern and vital stories. Our aim was to learn from those who are doing it right, so as to inspire other heritage brands to revitalize their present and future, and to enable newer brands to lay the foundations for writing vital, lasting legacies of their own. From our research, we learned about the five essential things successful legacy authors do: They create and maintain brands that mobilize, elevate, activate, reveal and recognize.

AUTHORING TENETS

The logo for the brand 'method' is displayed in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font against a solid red rectangular background.

1 Mobilizing

Historically, brands placed emphasis on their number of years in business. There was a belief that through tradition, achieved over time, they would establish authority that moved consumers to act. Today, we see more brands that have achieved marketplace authority based less on years in existence and more on an ability to mobilize believers. So, the socially conscious method brand is building a modern legacy for today’s consumers versus Clorox not simply because they persist, but because more impassioned fans are drawn to their view: People against dirty. In sum, vital legacy authors establish their authority by continuously mobilizing people around a shared pursuit.

The logo for 'Lucky Brand' features the brand name in a white, elegant script font. Below it, the phrase 'BORN IN AMERICA' is written in a smaller, white, uppercase, sans-serif font, all set against a solid red rectangular background.

2 Elevating

Historically, brands prioritized repetition and familiarity over innovation and change. There was a belief that consumers would stay loyal to brands that they anticipated would deliver consistently across their product or service offering. Today, we see more brands deepening relationships via surprise and delight rather than by strictly repeating themselves. So, Lucky Brand Jeans is developing a modern legacy versus Levi Strauss & Co. not only by doing things predictably with their denim, but also by being very inventive with their unique cultural collaborations and limited-edition co-brand creations. In sum, vital legacy authors build anticipation by continuously elevating expectations.

The Amazon logo is displayed in white on a red background. It features the word "amazon" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with a curved arrow underneath that starts under the letter 'a' and ends under the letter 'z'.

3 Activating

Historically, brands assumed control over telling their story: product, price, place and promotion. There was a belief that marketers owned brands, while consumers only consumed them. Today, we see more brands retaining power by giving up control in this new consumer-first, technology-enabled and choice-filled world. Amazon, a large e-tailer of books, creates its modern legacy by inviting consumers to preview books and share opinions about products and services—versus the bricks-and-mortars, like Barnes & Noble, that have been slower to adapt. In sum, vital legacy authors empower consumers by continuously giving them an active role in telling their story.

The Lexus logo is displayed in white on a red background. It consists of a stylized 'L' inside an oval, followed by the word "LEXUS" in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font.

4 Revealing

Historically, brands worked hard to hide their product and service secrets. There was a belief that there was advantage in not revealing them so consumers would stay intrigued and companies could protect their assets. Today, we see more brands sharing their behind-the-scenes stories for similar reasons including building intrigue by inspiring consumers who aspire to possess insider knowledge. Lexus has established a modern legacy versus its older rivals by showing consumers the details behind the details, and even sharing the technology used in R&D to develop next-gen models. In sum, vital legacy authors continuously build mystique by revealing their methods.

The Ritz-Carlton logo is displayed in white on a red background. It features a crest with a lion's head above a crown, with the words "THE RITZ-CARLTON" in a serif font below it.

5 Recognizing

Historically, brands focused on pursuing new customers as a high priority for achieving growth. There was a belief that the best way to create status for a new crowd was to see past the existing one that tied them to the past. Today, we see more brands invested in growing by having deeper relationships with their passionate core: recognizing them more than just rewarding them, and inspiring one generation to share their advocacy with the next. The Ritz-Carlton is rebuilding its modern legacy versus many of its less-pedigreed rivals by investing in creating deep loyalty. In sum, vital legacy authors grow their status by continuously recognizing their passionate core.

For today's marketers, the conversation about legacy must evolve from one about old versus new to one about relevance. Brands that are writing their history, not reading from it, are more likely to be relevant. Brands that mobilize, elevate, activate, reveal and recognize—brands that are giving consumers a role in the stories they

continue to write—are more likely to stay relevant. While history has value, since past behavior can be the basis upon which brands earn respect, and while modernity has value since people are drawn to news, the most relevant and vital brands succeed by creating legacy with the future and their consumers always in mind. ■

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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.