

Building a brand should not be complicated

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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One of the biggest problems in marketing today is the way in which everything seems to be couched in hyped-up terminology that ultimately confuses everyone from boards of directors to small business owners.

So it was with great delight that I read through *The Brand Book*, written by one of South Africa's foremost marketers, Dr Thomas Oosthuizen.

It is a smallish book - only 125 pages - which is the first clue to the content - namely that building a brand is not a complicated process requiring an encyclopaedia of instruction.

Plain language

But best of all, Oosthuizen has shown his understanding of marketing by speaking in a language that will be understood by all who read what he has to say - from marketing students to brand managers who have been handed the job without really having ever come to grips with the basics.

Oosthuizen's credentials are, of course, impeccable. He has done the hard yards on client-side and in agencies. He has worked with some of the world's biggest brands and also some of the smallest.

The book is targeted at senior company executives, CEO's, FD's, non-marketers, senior marketers and brand managers as well as, to a certain extent, academics.

When I spoke to Oosthuizen about his book he said that the challenges most company executives and marketers face today are:

- How to identify new opportunities to grow their brands, the value of these brands and the profit margins they achieve.
- How to launch new brands and ensure that they will work.
- How to do this all with less money.
- How to be more accountable for the money they spend on marketing.

"Marketing ROI is becoming critical with the global economic crunch. It is a topic CEO's are very concerned about. There are not many books dealing with this topic *per se*. Many CEO's question the value of their marketing, some figures suggest around 70% of CEO's believe their business and marketing objectives require greater alignment (i.e., UK Formalise Group findings, amongst other similar US-based findings)."

Oosthuizen developed his own "how-to" over the years to maximise brand launches.

"Covering the pillars of brand building in one book (most books cover one or two topics, without relating them to the rest) - with one central model/approach that underlies all the thinking that relates to a brand. This model is new. It touches upon many key decisions a marketer faces everyday," he said.

"De-mystifying" marketing and brand jargon by an "easy-to-understand-and-relate-to" approach and using as many examples as feasible, at local and global level, the book is simple, more a "how-to" than trying to be clever. Many marketers will have had similar experiences, but Oosthuizen just puts it all together in one, short book.

"I have been fortunate" said Oosthuizen, "to be involved with many blue-chip brands over the last twenty years - as a marketer, a brand strategist in agencies and as owner of my own company brand. These include the launch and early phases of iconic brands like OUTsurance, Vodacom, e.tv, Emirates, AngloGold Ashanti, 20twenty, eBucks, and many fast-moving consumer goods brands. Despite the variances between these brands, there are 'universal truths' that can be learnt from their success."

Learning from mistakes

"Having made some mistakes during this time - as well as having had high-profile successes, I learnt a lot about what works and what does not work. This 'intelligence' has formed part of my own frame-of-reference of how I look at brands. On the basis of this I have devised my own set of methodologies that I outline in the text. This forms the building blocks for 'how-to'," he said.

Central to the proposed book is what Oosthuizen calls the "brand value" model. This model consists of identifying the component parts that make-up a brand, and how they consecutively "create" value if they are aligned, and "destroy" value if they are not aligned.

"It is important for any brand owner to 1. Know what these are; 2. Know how they relate to one another and 3. Evaluate and understand where his/her brand is experiencing breakdowns in optimising the marketing and brand investment that is being made. Once a marketer or CEO knows where the gaps are, he or she can fix them. I also give a fair amount of detail on how best to manage every key aspect of a brand. So the book covers the key areas in some detail, it is not an in-depth book on one marketing issue.

"The model explains the key areas within brand management (the one's that I have learnt are the one's that really matter), how they relate to one another, and it gives an executive an easy 'how-to' approach to addressing problem areas and also an easy roadmap to launching a new brand. I will use local and global examples to illustrate these component parts.

Key pillars

"The model also illustrates how identifying and managing the key pillars of a brand, will create an exponential gain for the brand. In the same way that a mathematical formula works, the proper management of one component, added to another, creates incremental gain for both, whereas the bad management of a given component will lead to an exponential negative impact upon the brand. "

Beyond this model, which forms the core that runs through the proposed book, Oosthuizen elaborates on other key issues such as identifying how a brand owner evolves his/her brand without alienating existing customers. This is what he calls the "core values" approach.

There is no doubt that once the reader has completed the book, he or she will have a far greater grasp of what makes up a brand, how to better manage it and how to ensure it has the best chance to optimise its value as an asset and a profit generator.

The Brand Book, by Thomas Oosthuizen is now available in all major bookstores or online. For further information go to www.drthomasbrand.co.za.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in Kw aZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdyk@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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