

## **Prepare for Massive Growth**

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Over the past 20 years, Vista Branding has helped dozens - hundreds - of companies realize their potential in the marketplace through effective and creative branding efforts. Along the way, some of those clients took a much different and more ambitious path, as we engaged them not just to rebrand, but to prepare for massive growth.

Like most great achievements in life and business, doing anything audacious requires courage, vision, and a plan. The leaders of the organizations who get through the growth stage have courage and vision. We helped them have a plan for growth.

As we took a 100,000 foot view of Vista, we realized that we, too, have a much larger calling. That internal review led to what we now know as Vista Growth, which - no pun intended - grew out of Vista Branding. As we looked back at the clients on whom our work had the greatest impact, we quickly discovered a very clear pattern. We set the expectations of a lot of hard work and not an inexpensive process over several months, and then we guided these courageous, visionary leaders on a path to break through, not across Geoffrey Moore's chasm, but through to incredible growth and, in some cases, huge liquidity events.

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### **How the Vista Brand Roadmap Process works**

We conduct in depth market research, lead a sequence of facilitated group planning sessions and one-on-one interviews with the full buy in of Key executives and stakeholders who form the *Guiding Coalition*. From all the data gathered in all of these sessions, Vista provides objective insight, clarity, focus, and a strategic Brand Roadmap for the entire organization.

The end result is an actual deliverable. A plan. A two-three year roadmap to total organizational transformation to set the stage for the business that the courageous leadership team envisions.

#### **Step One: Who are we today?**

This first step of the process takes a strictly internal view of the brand. The Guiding Coalition members are interviewed together and individually in a discovery process to determine how the organization views itself, the good, bad, and ugly, including how the founding and history of the organization has established and upheld the original brand. The following items are thoroughly reviewed and discussed.

- 1) Visual communications - how does the organization currently impart its branding message today, both internally and externally?
- 2) Business strategy documents - how do the formal documents of the organization represent the brand today?
- 3) Corporate culture - where did the corporate culture originate, and how is the culture aligned with the brand?

More importantly, does the leadership team agree as to what the brand is today? If they do not agree, why? What are the functional and systematic differences in their respective understandings of what the brand is today and their respective visions for what it would be tomorrow? The tough questions begin immediately, to make sure that there is complete understanding of the depth and rigor of the process.

The goal of stage one is to establish a thorough, documented, fact-based baseline of where the organization is today and how it got to this point. All the data captured during stage one - financial, organizational, cultural, locations, operations, and all other dimensions of the brand - creates the basis on which decisions are made in the remaining stages.

### **Stage Two: Who do we want to be?**

The second stage requires the executive team and stakeholders to express their internal aspirations for the brand. It is during this stage that the courage and vision of the leaders begins to show. Does the leadership want to be a billion dollar organization, IPO, or will they choose steady but slower growth to maintain the status quo? It requires real courage to publicly state audacious goals and visions.

However, this stage of vision-casting is built upon and dependent upon the realizations that came about in stage one. In other words, dreaming is great, but a leader has to take the current situation into account as they cast a great vision, because often times the delta between where you are now and where you want to be is greater than it seems.

- 1) Growth conversations - How has the company created and then endured growth in the past? Is the organization even prepared for rapid growth? The team examines the underpinning processes, personnel, technology, and market opportunity required to sustain dramatic growth.
- 2) Goal & futurecasting exploration - What direction does the company leadership want to take? What are the short, mid-term, and long-term goals that will take the organization to that point?
- 3) Brand reputation & management - A brand can be created, but it cannot be left alone. Brand management requires intentionality, planning, and care, and such oversight must begin with leadership.

Again, at this second stage, we determine if the leadership team is in agreement as to who they want the company to be in the future. This stage is about looking anywhere from 2 to 10 years into the future with a huge, outrageous goal that may seem impossible. Is everyone on board? If not, why not? Are there doubts about the organization's ability to reach the goal or the goal itself? How should the goals be prioritized?

### **Stage Three: Who are we perceived to be?**

At this point, having examined internally what the brand is and what we want the brand to become, we embark on an *external* view of who and what the brand is perceived to be. We do extensive research among the brand's partners, customers, competitors, prospects, and the market at large. We look specifically at the following perceptions from outside the company.

- 1) Brand & product attributes - What is liked, disliked? Why do customers choose the brand? Why do prospects not choose the brand? What is the general perception of the brand in the marketplace?
- 2) Contrast to competition - How does the market view the brand compared to and contrasted with the competition? What are the major perceived differences and similarities? Is the brand generally viewed favorably or unfavorably?
- 3) Industry/media perceptions - Combing through unsolicited reviews, earned media, and other press, we examine how the brand is viewed by third parties.
- 4) Primary research; qualitative and/or quantitative - In addition to gathering the general and specific opinions of the brand, we also develop the quantitative model of the brand's place in the market space. Is the brand winning?

Stage three can be a major inflection point in the process. Many times, leadership is insulated - intentionally or not - from the reality of market perception. Thus, hearing unfavorable opinions of the brand may come as a surprise to the leadership. How will this information be processed? The courageous leaders accept both praise and dissent, and learn from both measures of the market.

### **Stage Four: What does the market want?**

After stage three's delivery of what the market actually thinks about the brand, we move into the fourth stage, in which we discover the view from the marketplace of winning and losing brands in the space. In other words, we discover what the market actually wants - what is working today - in this particular space, and, in doing so, naturally determine where our brand aligns and does not align with the demand of the market.

- 1) Alternative brand positioning vs. marketplace winners - who are the current leaders and winners in the space, why are they leading, and how could our brand be better positioned to take the lion's share of the market? Which brands are not doing well and the space, and why not?

- 2) Test positionings with key audiences - Further primary research must be done in order to test branding hypotheses and move towards what will ultimately lead or win the market.
- 3) Final brand positions and attributes - What will win in our space? By engaging the marketplace, we determine what the long term market leader will look like.

### **Stage Five: Who can we be?**

With a clear understanding of what it will take to win the market space, we embark on an internal definition of who we are capable of being, based on all the data gathered to up to this point. Different from goal and vision casting, this exercise brings market realities, trends, and constraints into our view of who we desire to be, forcing us to determine who we can and will be.

- 1) Define goals & opportunities - Instead of casting vision, we're actually defining specific goals that are in complete alignment with the values of the brand.
- 2) Develop strategic options - There are many different paths to any goal. We will explore the options for reaching our goals, and then determine how exactly we will pursue our goals.
- 3) Test options with stakeholders - Proper socialization of the process and plan within the company's stakeholders is essential to total buy in and understanding of the new direction of the organization.
- 4) Draft "Platform for Growth" - What specifically must the organization do in order to achieve its full potential? This question is answered in detail as we draft the plan that will become the basis for all future goals, strategies, and tactical plans.

### **Stage Six: Declare who we will become.**

The sixth and final step in the process is to declare who we will become. This step is beyond casting visions for who we want to be or setting goals for what we want to achieve. Declaring who the organization will become is just that: declarative. All stakeholders are on board, and the roadmap for how the organization will get to its destination is created, down to the tactical level. This final step is the deliverable for the entire process, and provides leadership with a very clear, step-by-step plan for moving from what they are today to what they have declared they will be tomorrow.

- 1) Final declaration & clarification for the brand - Taking the form of "observations", "recommendations", and "proposed tactics", these statements form the plan for the organization to move forward based on deep market research and findings from the previous five steps.
- 2) Publish and socialize to all stakeholders - The final deliverable is published throughout the organization as the strategic roadmap for victory in the marketplace. Everyone in the organization is involved in the execution of the plan, which grew from the courage of leadership and research into the marketplace.

The Vista Brand Roadmap is a six-step, proprietary strategic process that clarifies an organization's plan to realize a desired future. The roadmap is not a C-Suite retreat weekend project, far from it. The roadmap requires a significant investment of time and financial resources in the future of the organization. Very few companies are ready to start, implement, and execute the roadmap, because few organizations are ready or able to courageously transform their business. Courageous leaders are willing to make the commitment to this level of change in preparation for such growth.

If your brand is ready to be transformed into a growth machine, we'd love to have a conversation with you. Please call or email Steve Beshara at ~~### ###-####~~ to arrange an hour to discuss your brand's possibilities free of charge.