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The Brand Bubble

The Looming Crisis in Brand Value and How to Avoid It

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

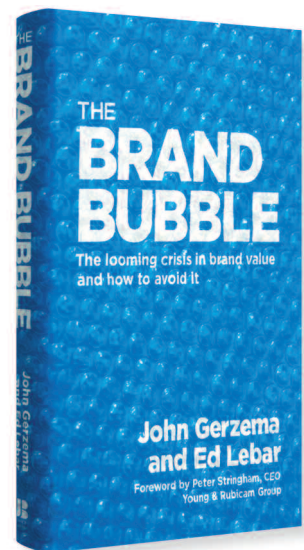
There's another bubble hiding in our economy. It represents more than \$4 trillion in S&P market capitalization. It's twice the size of the subprime mortgage market. But unlike other bubbles, the assets at risk cannot be traded away or hedged against uncertainty. Rather, they are the fundamental drivers of competitive advantage for most organizations: their brands.

This summary lays out credible evidence that businesses think brands are worth more than the consumers who buy them. The number of high-performance, value-creating brands is diminishing across the board. Yet at the same time, the financial markets keep raising brand valuations. The result is a brand bubble that could erase large portions of corporate intangible value and send another shockwave through the global economy.

In this summary, the authors of *The Brand Bubble* reveal their surprising findings from extensive academic research, featuring the discovery of *energized differentiation*, a quantifiable measure of a brand's motion, creativity and continuous evolution. Brands with this quality are irresistible to consumers and demonstrably more valuable to business. This summary guides readers through a five-stage process for reorganizing the organization around the brand — the key to sustainable, profitable brand performance.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to make your brand irresistible to consumers.
- Why you must embrace the concept that everything is now a marketing channel.
- How to break through the static, short-term cycle of brand management.
- Ways to command greater levels of support and more leeway to experiment and explore.



by John Gerzema
and Ed Lebar

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: THE BRAND BUBBLE

by John Gerzema and Ed Lebar

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Tulipmania and Inflated Brands

In 1841, Charles Mackay wrote his famous book *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* to describe various marketing phenomena. Of special note was his passage on “Tulipmania,” an occurrence that took place in Holland in the early decades of the 1600s. The madness began when tulip bulbs imported from Turkey were found to grow extremely well in Dutch soil. The Dutch aristocracy acquired an immense taste for their beauty, and seeing how much could be made from tulips, thousands of average citizens sold their assets and began buying the bulbs.

People from all economic classes began trading in tulip bulbs at exorbitant prices. Speculators even took out futures contracts on unplanted bulbs, convinced that some varieties were slated to become the most expensive objects in the world. But at the height of the hysteria, the craze for tulips suddenly withered, leaving thousands of Holland's most successful businessmen holding worthless contracts while the less affluent who had invested in the flower lost entire life savings over a bunch of dried bulbs.

Irrational Investing

Tulipmania might have been no more than a footnote in Dutch history were it not such a clear example of something that has happened time and again around the globe over the last several centuries. As recently as the past decade, modern business analysts using econometric models and computer algorithms acted as blindly to irrational investing as their counterparts in 17th-century Holland. Financial busts stemming from the dot-coms, Internet equipment manufacturers and subprime mortgages are but a few examples of recent market tumbles

after which investors, like the Dutch and their shriveled bulbs, were left with inordinate losses.

A bubble is a curious thing. In hindsight, it seems so obvious and predictable, while anyone caught up in the middle of one is blind to its potential for disaster. In all bubbles, one constant always predicates a collapse. That is the optimistic assumption that someone else will always be willing to buy what you are selling, regardless of how irrationally high the price is relative to the bare facts of the product's underlying value.

The Impending Brand Bubble

Now, another bubble is hiding in our economy. This bubble represents \$4 trillion in S&P market capitalization alone. It's twice the size of the subprime mortgage market. And it accounts for more than one-third of all shareholder value. Credible evidence suggests that *financial markets think brands are worth more than the consumers who buy them*. The constantly rising valuation of major brands is creating a brand bubble, one that could erase large portions of intangible value in firms and send a shockwave through the global economy.

In essence, the multiples that markets place on brand value overstate actual consumer sentiment, so the value creation that brands bring is greatly exaggerated. That is, Wall Street is long on brands; consumers are short on brands.

Overvalued Brands

Fissures are forming in the pillars of brand equity. This conclusion is based on research of 15 years of brand and financial data from Young & Rubicam's BrandAsset Valuator, the world's largest study of consumer attitudes and perceptions on brands. There is a growing divergence between brand valuation and brand speculation. Data indicates that investors are irrationally overvaluing



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brands and that if leading companies don't take steps to change their approach, more than a few of them might soon experience dramatic declines in market value.

The problem is that these stellar brands are becoming fewer in number. In today's changing consumer climate, exceptional brands are just that — exceptions. Most of the brands lining supermarket shelves, hanging from department store racks or touting their superiority on television are experiencing a rapid diminution of perceived value. Consumers are simply falling out of love with a majority of brands they buy. ●

Can You Say 'Irresistible'?

Some brands constantly create *exceptional attitude change* that keeps driving their financial numbers upward. They pulse with a kind of creative life force that pushes their values upward even in declining markets. They continue evolving over time, providing a steady forward-looking vision and continuous excitement among the customers they serve. They have something unique: energy.

Isolating the Nature of Energy

Energy is the consumer perception of motion and direction in a brand. Energy can be found in any brand, large or small, new or old, in any category. And regardless of how much energy a brand has, a change in energy forecasts a change in the financial performance of the firm.

We get energized by ideas that reframe our view of the world or help us reach deeper inside ourselves. Energy develops when there is conviction, creativity, inspiration, optimism and hope. And just as in the human condition, there is energy in brands.

People gravitate toward brands that, despite having little different to offer, seem to have a certain thing about them. This "thing" is the ability of a brand to be "irresistible." The brands accountable for disproportionate value creation have a palpable and measurable energy that make them so compelling that they foster an irrational fidelity.

Principles of an Irresistible Brand

Here are six key principles that identify the essential characteristics of an irresistible brand:

- Irresistible brands are highly irrational and yet entirely irrefutable. They are provocative and daring while pleasing and reassuring.
- Irresistible brands move with innate purpose and conviction.
- Irresistible brands constantly reinvent themselves; they have an insatiable appetite for change.
- Irresistible brands engage customers on their own

terms. They speak in a language all their own.

- Irresistible brands don't force devotion — they compel it. These brands have a magnetism that attracts without chasing.
- Irresistible brands move culture as well as categories. Often, these brands' actions have a disproportional impact on society.

It is not essential that consumers sense all six of these characteristics; one is sufficient, provided it is unique to the brand. But as with any recipe for success, the more energy consumers derive from a brand, the more irresistible the brand becomes and the more powerful it becomes as an agent of creating future value. ●

Wall Street, Meet Main Street

Consumers don't just buy brands — they invest in them. Faced with so much choice in the marketplace, *consumers now select brands based on the same principles investors use to select stocks.* In choosing a brand, consumers now seek to maximize the return on their investment, whether that return comes to them in enjoyment, knowledge, security, appearance or social currency. They want to invest in a brand with a plan, one that brings them benefits tomorrow, not just today.

Five Parallel Behaviors of Consumers and Investors

Consumers apply five of the same thought processes in choosing what brands to buy as investors use to choose what assets they hold:

- 1. Consumers and investors seek future benefits.** Today's consumers are voracious planners. They decide their future now, and this extends to their brand choices.
- 2. Consumers and investors want to maximize current returns.** Like investors, today's consumers also want as much immediate return as they can get.
- 3. Consumers and investors accumulate information and knowledge before investing.** Today's consumers behave like analysts: They have an endless appetite for information, and now they have access to it.
- 4. Consumers and investors watch for movement to simplify choice.** Like investors, today's consumers track brands, share information and ask each other, "Is this a hot brand?"
- 5. Consumers and investors demand transparency and accountability.** Since the Enron debacle and the parade of corporate scandals that followed it, investors have had little tolerance for executive chicanery. Evidence of ethical behavior, social responsibility and concern for sustainability now weigh heavily on consumer choices as well.

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When you put all these behaviors together, the result is a consumer who bases decisions on a psychology not all that different from the savvy investor's. This behavior is relatively new, a reflection of the increasing sophistication today's consumers bring to the buying process.

Since basic principles of investor management now apply to brand management, customer relations become remarkably similar to investor relations, making it possible to unify various ideologies about how brands and companies should be managed. ●

The Postmodern Craving for Creativity

The British estimate that their creative and cultural industries such as architecture, filmmaking and advertising account for 7.1 percent of their overall economy, employing almost 2 million and placing this type of work on a par with the financial industry. The creative edge is now where competitive advantage is achieved through startling innovation and paradigm-shifting thought.

The growing societal attraction to creativity has its roots in the postmodern world's existential angst and our need to realize the human search for meaning. Modernism romanced us with the idea that things can only get better. Modernism promised that our whites can be whiter, our cars can be faster and our houses can be bigger. It perpetuated the idea that progress is our birthright and that we can buy improvement through material acquisition.

So what about postmodernism? It happens when someone points out that modernism can no longer conceal the truths made all too apparent by contemporary life. Consumers are torn between wanting to believe modernist promises and being too savvy to suspend disbelief.

Happiness, Honesty and Hope

At its most primal level, creativity promises *happiness, honesty* and *hope*. Creativity counteracts the lack of meaning. Creativity promises guidance. Creative people and innovative ideas are inspirational. Creativity subliminally signals numerous benefits to our well-being, qualities like youthfulness, immortality, confidence, truth, freedom and self-determination. We admire creative people, companies, brands, products and services because they produce a positive and often unfiltered vision of human existence, which brings added meaning in small or even large ways to our lives. Creativity is embedded in the spirit of irresistible brands.

For now, creativity is the new must-have of the marketplace because it offers honesty, progress and a way to find answers to life's uncertainties. Innovation and new ideas, whether in media, consumer content, products,

architecture, design or science — or other pursuits — is in such demand because it comforts like never before. It's creativity that encourages people to dream about tomorrow and nurtures their efforts to do so. ●

Welcome to ConsumerLand

"ConsumerLand" is a magical place where fantasy meets reality, creativity meets commerce and technology meets passion. This is a land where consumers have unprecedented technology at their fingertips to envision more ambitious dreams and express themselves more vividly, which in turn gives them unprecedented power to alter their relationship with brands. The broadband world has amplified consumer behavior as critics, creators, parents, buyers and citizens. And it has heightened their expectations of brands and put air into the brand bubble.

In ConsumerLand, people may behave differently, but they're still pursuing timeless human wants and needs. We've always had friends; now we log on to Facebook and MySpace. We've always let our fingers do the walking; now we use Google and craigslist.

The problem is, many companies still operate their marketing departments according to the old thinking of persuasion, metrics and an "us-them" landscape. They're blind to the behavioral shifts transforming customers right in front of their eyes. As a result, consumers drift further away, and we continue to see brand measures decay and crack. It's those enterprises that can't see the brand bubble blowing up around them.

Lessons Learned

ConsumerLand is taking a harsh and critical look at your business and your brands, creating new principles to abide by, including:

- We don't control our brands anymore; we simply guide them through the marketplace of consumers.
- We no longer have a linear communication path to consumers. They have an unprecedented ability to route around marketers to hear whatever they want, whenever they want, if at all. You can't just go after them. You must attract them.
- Consumers are no longer passive recipients waiting for marketing monologues. Brands must seek out ways to engage them.
- Some consumers will produce content for brands, regardless of whether we want them to or not.
- People trust other people more than they trust brands.
- Consumers want excitement and dynamism out of their brands.

No specific formula will guide your operations in ConsumerLand; marketers must instead experiment with

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various approaches. *Marketing communications need to be marketing conversations.* ●

PART TWO: APPLICATION

Stage One — Exploration: Performing an Energy Audit

Changing your brand management is a conscious process, one that can be managed and directed. New skills can be learned. A more inclusive form of brand management can be developed, one that recognizes that everyone in the organization is accountable for the dynamic relationship between the consumer and the brand.

The process starts with an *Energy Audit* to assess the level of energy currently present in your brand. Your goal is to capture a baseline measure that identifies the current sources of energy, so you can understand your brand's strengths and weaknesses and detect how well your brand management is aligned with the dynamics of the new marketplace. Equally important, the Energy Audit allows you to identify potential pathways for building even higher levels of energy.

Energized Differentiation

Energized Differentiation is formed from two dimensions — energy and differentiation — each having several elements. Three attribute clusters comprise energy:

- **Vision:** The brand's purpose and aspirations, often originating from the leadership, convictions and reputation of the company behind the brand.
- **Invention:** The most tangible dimension, demonstrating the brand's perceptions through product or service innovation, design, content and other tactile brand experiences.
- **Dynamism:** How the brand expresses itself in a dynamic way in the marketplace to create persona, emotion, advocacy and evangelism through its marketing and other forms of conversations with consumers.

Differentiation is made up of:

- **Offering:** The measure of the brand's special characteristics in terms of products, services and other content that the consumer experiences.
- **Uniqueness:** The brand's essence, positioning and brand equity.
- **Distinction:** The reputation the brand has earned through existing communications and brand image created up to this point.

The First Law of Energy

Building creativity in an organization is undermined by the fact that *many companies confuse risk avoidance with*

risk management.

Getting past risk avoidance is possible if you are willing to believe the statistics. The numbers supporting risk taking are convincing and can help overcome management anxiety if you let them. The statistics are embedded in the first Law of Energy, the Law of Averages: *Creativity spreads out risk.*

When enterprises spread out creativity across their brand, they actually mitigate risk. That's because almost nothing restricts the consumers' definition of creativity. People can sense energy in large, established companies that excel in management and business models, as well as in small, niche companies that stand out in product or service innovation or R&D.

No longer constrained by geography, media distribution restrictions or production resources, creativity can be sourced in any location — and can travel anywhere, to be shared by anyone and imbued with meaning almost instantly. Companies now have a multitude of exciting new ways to have marketplace conversations.

The New Rule of Brand Management

In ConsumerLand, brand performance is no longer black and white. There is no offline versus online. This leads us to the Stage 1 New Rule of Brand Management: **Everything is media and everything communicates.**

Companies must embrace the concept that everything is now media and therefore a marketing channel. Today, media isn't just something advertisers pay for. Media is any point where the consumer engages with a brand, or with its company, for that matter. Consumers look everywhere and see everything. The enterprise itself is a series of touch-points, offering endless ways to inspire brand conversations and channel energy back to consumers. These new pathways often detour around traditional marketing practices, but they're still media, and they're perceived by consumers as energy.

Stage Two — Distillation: Identifying the Energy Core

The core of brand thinking is: *To achieve our goals, we need to make the brand an organizing principle for the business.* This requires finding a central brand thought that everyone can buy into, so they can all work to make it real. This is not simply an advertising idea but a galvanizing brand idea that creates unity in the organization while bringing the consumer and the brand alive for everyone.

An Energy Core

This process building is called an *Energy Core*. The goal is

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to synthesize a single energy pulse that has the power to infuse and inform every aspect of the enterprise's activities, a Core that can radiate ideas to further enhance the brand's Vision, Invention and Dynamism. The Energy Core captures the essential idea behind the brand's existence. It defines the brand's role in the marketplace and within the organization.

The Energy Core is the coalescing expression of the brand's positioning. It helps institutionalize culture and systems around the one powerfully defined idea that underpins the brand. It achieves a common foundation for one operating philosophy and point of reference. A strong, solid Energy Core becomes the central organizing idea that people embrace and mobilize into action.

An Energy Core is about building a company that acts on what it says.

The Second Law of Energy

To surmount the usual corporate shareholder-centric view of the world, to resolve the conflict of agendas within the enterprise and to ensure that everyone is focused on creating a strong, energized brand, companies should adhere to the second Law of Energy, the Law of Openness: *Brands don't control, they enhance and extend.*

For companies to adhere to the Law of Openness, they must realize their brands are public servants as much as agents of commerce. Rather than working to force consumers to keep the brand top of mind, they must instead work to keep consumers on top of their minds. This thinking is embodied in the Stage 2 New Rule of Brand Management: **Treat customers like investors.**

Today, brands must think of themselves as being in the business of attracting consumers in the same way their enterprises attract investors. ●

Stage Three — Ignition: Creating an Energized Value Chain

In *ignition*, the enterprise takes the fuel from its Energy Core and uses it to drive the brand forward, continuously activating and renewing the sources of Vision, Invention and Dynamism. This then transfers energy out to consumers and back through the organization.

In chemistry, ignition occurs when the heat produced by a reaction becomes sufficient to sustain it. Similarly, in business, ignition occurs when the excitement produced by the Energy Core becomes sufficient to sustain creativity, customer attraction and business growth.

Where does that spark come from? It can only come from connecting management with employees, employees with each other and the company with the outside

world. The organization's goals for the brand must become real for everyone. All participants must understand how their own actions boost the energy levels in the brand and fuel the Core.

The Obstacle to Beat Back

Only continuous business innovation will create sustainable competitive advantage. But when management is focused primarily on short-term performance, an Energized Value Chain is never optimized. The distractions that cause managers to fail to take a long-term view form the third obstacle to true brand-centered enterprise integration: *Management's focus is primarily on today's profitability.*

Given the pressure to drive quarterly earnings and the relative absence of forward-looking brand metrics, marketing's perceived worth inevitably ends up being judged largely on current sales. This turns marketing into a leaf blower — primarily pushing out current inventory to maximize current quarterly earnings for shareholders.

The Third Law of Energy

The way to break through the static, short-term cycle of brand management is to embrace the third Law of Energy, the Law of Direction: *A brand is not a place, it's a direction.*

ConsumerLand runs on a Darwinian principle. Like animals in the wild, consumers handle a vast, diversified brandscape by staying alert to movement. Consumers now cope with life by making decisions based on pieces of the picture that are changing, rather than on what stays the same. Sameness recedes into the background. With change occurring at such an accelerated rate, and confronted with such an astonishing number of products and choices, consumers worry about falling behind the learning curve, betting on the wrong technology or investing in a product that rapidly becomes obsolete.

The New Rule of Brand Management

Through a brand, consumers expect future utility on the part of the entire company. Managing the brand and its momentum and direction is now everyone's responsibility. Every link in the value chain needs to be devoted to the brand and the consumer to align strategic decisions with product and service innovation, brand management, customer experience and marketing. To achieve this, the brand and its Energy Core must be used as a basis for guiding the business forward, rather than simply a brand-building communications function detached from business strategy. The New Rule of Brand Management for this stage is: **Drive the brand back through the organization.**

Instead of simply sending a brand into the marketplace, a company with an Energized Value Chain constantly

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thinks, plans and acts from the viewpoint of the brand. This company is able to balance the short with the long and maintain the energy supply necessary to propel the brand forward. Together these moves create a culture that consistently champions creativity and embraces change. ●

Stage Four — Fusion: Becoming an Energy-Driven Enterprise

Management must now focus on formalizing this way of working throughout the organization. Stakeholders need to transfer their energy and passion to their business units and functions. At this stage, management is asking, “How do we know this is working? Are our plans taking hold?” When management’s aspirations for the brand and business are becoming part of the culture, that’s the start of the final stage of transformation called *fusion*, a defining characteristic of companies that launch out of their categories and exceed customer expectations.

A New Imperative

“Brand as organizing principle” in the company creates a new imperative for business. The brand is the central focus of all decision making. Consumer insights are a catalyst to internal collaboration and marketplace conversations. The brand and the consumer are at the heart of business strategy.

Resources mean money, people and capabilities so that marketing can be a way of thinking across the company. You don’t need a bigger marketing department; you need a marketing mindset that permeates the entire organization.

The Fourth Law of Energy

Remarkable brands often have remarkable marketing. And when brands are remarkable marketers, they do great work, which attracts greater resources both inside and outside the company. Consumers give them permission to be ever more daring, to experiment and explore new frontiers. If something fails, they absolve the brand and forgive the error, appreciating the effort. They even build communities to insulate the brand from competitors and criticism. This thinking is embedded in the fourth Law of Energy: the Law of Immunity: *Brands with remarkable marketing access remarkable privileges.*

As category disruption happens more frequently, brands must increasingly extend their reach, reinvent their business models and head into new frontiers of growth and profitability. Brands with immersive and highly integrated marketing can command greater levels of support and more leeway to experiment and explore. Consumers, in acting like investors, will champion brands that take calculated risks while penalizing those that play it too safe.

Brands Must Be Verbs

To compete in today’s world, brands must be verbs. Rather than being a fixed, stationary promise, the brands consumers notice and attach themselves to are the ones that are heading somewhere. If a brand isn’t moving, it’s invisible.

The New Rule of Brand Management

Rather than being insular, marketing needs to pervade the mindset of the entire enterprise. A new rule here is the Stage 4 New Rule of Brand Management: **Return marketing back upstream into business strategy.**

Why is it that some of the best CMOs are CEOs? These include people like Jobs, Murdoch, Schultz, Branson, Nordstrom and Whitman. The approach they take to their brands is evidence for a more broadly defined role for marketing. These leaders coalesce marketing into a generalist capability in the organization, rather than segmenting it into specialties and silos. ●

Stage Five — Renewal: Active Listening and Constant Refreshing of Brand Meaning

Today, brands must be in a state of constant *renewal*. They must subject themselves to never-ending feedback. They must be ready to reshape themselves over and over again, in whatever form that takes. Brands, like business, are in permanent flux. While brands are decaying in ever more compressed cycles of time, energized brands are leading, adapting, surprising, innovating, involving and responding — behaving differently at different times with different customers, and collaborating, not just persuading. With expanding consumer power and limitless choice, brands cannot possibly stay the same for long.

In today’s world, market position has never been more temporary. Success is often a momentary high, followed by a tumbling fall. We must listen carefully to the market and learn from its mistakes in a forward-looking way. We must continuously modify, personalize, share and improve upon ourselves. Our brands must be an agent of constant surprise.

The fact is, everything is moving faster today, creating unparalleled pressure on brands to be quicker, smarter, leaner, more responsive and able to innovate more quickly. A critical factor slowing momentum is often the need to protect and vet the sacred strategy. Strategic accuracy often trumps the needs for the brand to respond to meet consumers’ changing needs. This

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Break Free From Monotony

When faced with a decision about your brand, consider it your opportunity to act, to be unlike so many brands looking to repeat past glories through an endless recycling of the same tired formula. Today, the biggest asset a brand can possess is its capacity to change. Brands that break free from monotony and lead consumers to hope and dream, to socialize or simply amaze — these brands are proven to derive superior economic performance.

inability to change lies at the heart of consumer discontent with so many stagnant and predictable brands.

The Fifth Law of Energy

The fifth Law of Energy points the way to break out of this dilemma — the Law of Reflex: *Tactics are strategy, strategy is tactics.*

Conventional wisdom states that strategy is what matters and tactics are just short-term initiatives that don't build brands. Thus marketers devote an excessive amount of time to thinking about, developing, researching and selling strategy. Meanwhile, they ignore a real-world truth of today: Strategy doesn't always come first, nor does it necessarily have to. Approaching a strategy vortex, you can easily get sucked in and lose focus on your customer, or you can strategize too far out into the future, preventing yourself from maximizing opportunities in the here and now.

Strategy and Tactics

Strategy and tactics are more powerful when they lean on each other. Tactics propel strategy forward into action, and action helps a brand be more strategic. Both contribute value, because learning is a byproduct of action, not inaction. Together, the new consumer media and digital environment offer brands endless opportunities to be constantly surprising and refreshing. Tactics can keep a brand fresh and prolific, and its creativity becomes more disciplined in the process. When all those wonderfully creative tactical ideas start flying in the same direction, an energized brand becomes energy efficient and begins to gain speed and momentum. Thus, we arrive at the Stage 5 New Rule of Brand Management: **Act accurately, but by all means, act.**

Taking action anytime it's called for is why irresistible brands prove themselves to be endless sources of creativity and reinvention. An energized brand places itself in a state of constant change — fueled by its ever-renewing Vision,

Invention and Dynamism. While inefficient brands stall and restart, an energy-efficient brand applies continuous force, renewing more energy with each action. With enough action, a brand's energy becomes greater than its mass, and it actually needs less force to keep it going — less advertising and less promotion. It rarely if ever offers a discount. Instead, consumers create the energy around the brand, advocating and propelling it forward. ●

Epilogue: A Brand May Be Famous, But Is It Creating Returns for Shareholders?

Brand innovation is important as both a fiduciary responsibility and an ever-vital competitive weapon for business. Consumers are judging brands on their ability to deliver value tomorrow as well as today, so redefining the future of brand management to both grow and protect shareholder value is now a key imperative for business.

Business today must maximize consumer perceptions of value by continuously managing forward brand expectations with creativity, innovation and new brand experiences. We must strip away the hype and deliver real value for our brands to be seen as worthy of consumer investment. Just as Warren Buffett exemplifies the wisdom of investing in value stocks, consumers are now recognizing the same intrinsic value in brands. Companies that organize around their consumer and bring their brand into their business will enhance future shareholder value by restoring and enhancing consumer value.

Creative Brands

Energized Differentiation is the new force driving this shift. In a fractured, chaotic and uncertain world, consumers are drawn to creativity because a brand with a creative attitude helps them hedge against the future.

Consumers invest in highly creative brands. Most brands have customers, but brands with energy have followers. The idea isn't so outlandish. After all, a brand, regardless of its balance sheet value, is only ever worth something if consumers want to buy it ... and buy it again. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *The Brand Bubble*, you'll also like:

1. ***Selling Blue Elephants* by Howard Moskowitz and Alex Gofman.** According to the authors, great products don't come from focus groups, but from RDE (Rule Developing Experimentation).
2. ***Personality Not Included* by Rohit Bhargava.** In today's social media, identities are shaped as much by perception as communication and marketing are all about building relationships with customers.
3. ***Mass Affluence* by Paul Nunes and Brian Johnson.** The authors outline seven new rules for marketing to today's consumer.