

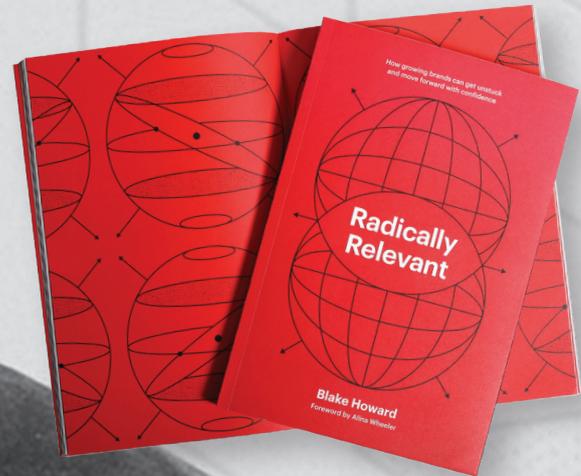
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Q4 • 2023

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## Is Your Brand RADICALLY RELEVANT?

An interview with Blake Howard,  
author of *Radically Relevant*



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**Field Notes: A Farming  
Community Tradition  
That Inspired a Brand**

**The How and Why  
of Conducting a  
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**2023 LogoLounge  
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### **Radically Relevant**

by Blake Howard

(Cover Story, page 6)



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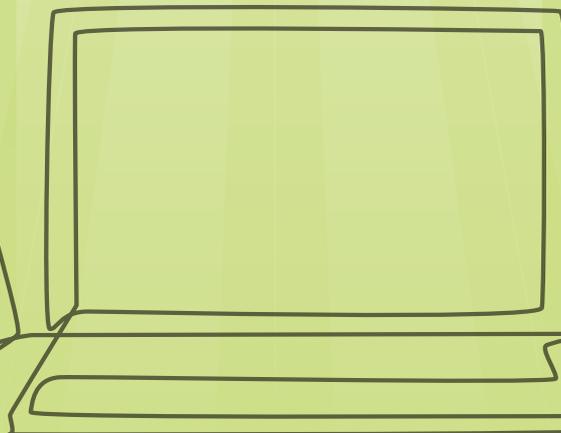
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# CONTENTS

WELCOME

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01

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## AND A LETTER FROM ...

According to Finder.com, through July 2023, 3.12 million business applications were submitted in the United States. That's music to the ears of Bill Gardner, founder of LogoLounge —new businesses mean new logos. Once again, we tapped into Bill to bring you access to the *2023 Logo Trend Report*. Bill and his team pored over more than 30,000 submitted logos and identified 15 logo trends, or “clusters,” they felt had the greatest impact on the logo world this year. Check out the free report, sign up for the LogoLounge newsletter, and enter for a chance to win a one-year membership to LogoLounge.



Drew Townsend  
Partner, Square One

Blake Howard wrote a book. Not just any book. A book based on his decades of agency experience and how he identified six key elements that must come together to make a brand **RADICALLY RELEVANT**. The book is a must-read, and Howard shared his insights with us in a cover story interview. Win a copy of *Radically Relevant* by registering for our latest giveaways.

For months we have been following the story of Field Notes, a brand/product brought to life by the inspired collection of original field notes booklets collected by designer Aaron Draplin. Now we're sharing the Field Notes story with you in Brands We Love. You could win a yearlong subscription to the most beautiful notebooks you've ever seen!

We round out this issue with our feature story on marketing asset audits—a must-do for every marketer. We hope you enjoy the content, the interviews, and the educational impact that *ONE:ONE* delivers to you each quarter. Be kind and share it with your colleagues!

one:one

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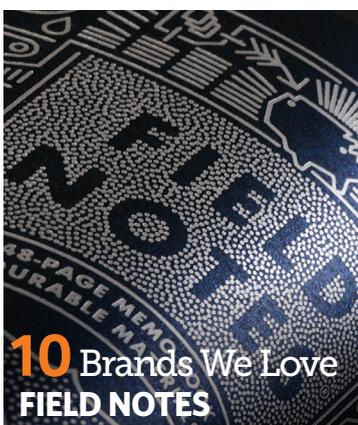
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## 06 Cover Story

Interview with author, agency owner Blake Howard



## 10 Brands We Love FIELD NOTES



## 12 Feature Marketing Asset Audits

## 01 Welcome

Letter from a partner.

## 02 Insights

Ideas, insights, expertise, and trends.

## 16 Spotlight

Paper Sustainability



## DESIGN & BRANDING »

# 8 TYPES OF LOGOS

## and How They Can Capture Your Audience

By Sky Ariella

Communicating effectively with the public requires subtle touches, like whispering into a potential buyer's ear and urging them to pick your brand over everything else on the market. An astute nudge in the right direction eases customers into feeling inspired by branding tactics, rather than commanded.

### That's where logos come into play.

If billboards and commercials are strangers screaming in a consumer's face, logos are a soft tap on the shoulder from an old friend. They can build a substantial relationship between a business and its customers, encouraging them to recognize and remember the brand throughout their everyday lives.

And for the brand and its marketing team, understanding how different types of logos influence brand identity and scalability is key—whether the logo is for a new brand readying to launch or for an existing brand's redesign. Just as a good logo remains in a customer's mind, the wrong one can turn them off forever. Familiarizing yourself with the eight core logo types can help you create one that will add interest and remain memorable, elevating your brand's recognizability and marketability over time.

## Using Words

### WORDMARK

Examples: Google, Coca-Cola, Disney, Mobil, *The New York Times*, eBay, Panasonic, Canon



There is nothing simpler than taking your company's name, writing it out in an attractive font, and using it as your brand's logo. It's ideal for new businesses that still need to work on instilling their name in customers' heads.

However, a wordmark logo only works for brands with short or snappy names. Think of the way Google, Disney, and Coca-Cola just roll off the tongue. Even the *New York Times* has a flow that makes it work.

### LETTERMARK OR MONOGRAM

Examples: Louis Vuitton, Chanel, NASA, IBM, the New York Yankees, Hewlett-Packard, Volkswagen



Companies aiming to honor their brand's name without directly spelling it out will appreciate a lettermark or monogram. This type of logo takes one to three of the brand's recognizable letters—think LV for Louis Vuitton or VW for Volkswagen—and turns them into a distinct trademark.

It's a compromise for companies with wordy, hard-to-digest names. Sometimes, a monogram logo becomes so interchangeable with a brand's identity that people may not recognize the full name, such as with American Broadcasting Company (ABC). Monograms work best for companies that already have a solid following—otherwise, it's just a bunch of ambiguous letters.

### LETTERFORM

Examples: McDonald's, Netflix, Yahoo, WordPress, E! Entertainment, General Mills



Brands on their way to becoming household names often create a downsized version of their logo. Cutting it down to a single letter makes it even easier to pop into customers' heads. Called letterform logos, these can be incredibly effective when used correctly.

All it takes is seeing Netflix's signature bold, red N and you're immediately prompted to cozy up on the sofa to binge your favorite series. These types of logos work best for established brands and might even emerge later in a company's life, with many top brands starting with a wordmark logo and evolving into a simpler letterform as they grow. For instance, the first three iterations of Netflix's trademark spelled out the company's entire name in a wordmark logo before they finally adopted their iconic, minimalist N in 2016.

## LOGO FACTS

Around **95%** of brands only use two colors in their logo.

The average life span of a logo is about **10** years.

## Using Symbols

### PICTORIAL

Examples: Apple, Twitter, Target, Shell, Domino's, Dropbox



You don't need words to communicate through logos—some of the best in history are pictorial. These logos encompass a brand's identity in a basic symbol. They're clever copies of the name through pictures, such as Target's bullseye or Dropbox's open-box graphic.

Symbols can be very powerful, as imagery can evoke deeper emotions and connections than words. That said, it's much more difficult to nail down an image that resonates with a brand name than it is to work with letters. Ask any branding or design team, and they will tell you to settle in for the long haul, as it'll take some serious time and effort to develop just the right one.

### MASCOT

Examples: Disney, Michelin, Nintendo, Cheetos, Pringles, M&M'S, Kool-Aid



If you can't twist your brand's name into a recognizable logo, adopt a mascot to build identity. Mascot logos do well because they give consumers someone to trust.

Generations have resonated with Mickey Mouse, Chester Cheetah, the M&M'S characters, and the Kool-Aid Man—they feel like they know them. Creating a lovable personality as a logo develops brand trust.

### ABSTRACT

Examples: Nike, PlayStation, Pepsi, Chase, the Olympic Games, PBS, BP, John Deere



Brands that consider themselves creative and possibly even cutting-edge may opt for an abstract logo to represent themselves. These logos don't blatantly state the brand name, like pictorials do; rather, they adopt artful symbols or shapes to represent their brand.

Nike's Swoosh is a prime example of an impactful abstract logo. But they didn't originally launch their brand with the Swoosh as their identifier. Instead, Nike started by using a combination logo to introduce the Swoosh to the world. Once people knew the brand, they dropped the name and only used their memorable abstract Swoosh. Now, the symbol itself is just as valuable as Nike's products.

## Hybrid

### COMBINATION

Examples: Adidas, Amazon, Mastercard, Airbnb, Hallmark, Microsoft, Doritos, PayPal, Spotify



Combination logos are the best of both worlds for new brands, allowing a company to get its name out there while building an association with a signature trademark symbol at the same time. The double benefit makes it one of the most popular types of logos, used by powerhouse brands such as Airbnb, Amazon, and Adidas.

### EMBLEM

Examples: Starbucks, the National Football League (NFL), Stella Artois, Harley-Davidson, BMW, Perrier



Emblems are a form of a combination logo that elicits a sense of traditionalism. In these logos, all text must go inside the symbol or icon. Originally used by universities, today emblems are a favorite logo style of brands in all industries and are famously used by Starbucks, the NFL, and BMW. ■

Fortune 500 companies by logo type:

Combination – **61%**

Wordmark – **31%**

Lettermark – **5%**

Emblem – **2.4%**

**60%** of consumers will avoid a brand with a logo they find odd, ugly, or unappealing.

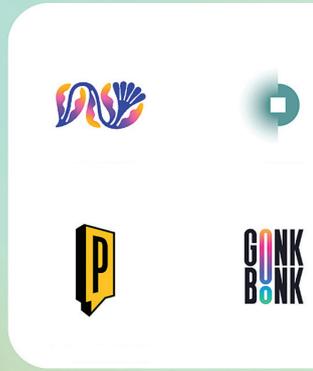
On average, a customer must see a logo **five to seven** times before remembering the brand.



## LOGO DESIGN »

# The 2023 Logo Trend Report

by  **logolounge**



## What do flora, asterisks, and Ritz crackers have in common?

They're all trending elements in corporate logos, according to the *2023 Logo Trend Report* from LogoLounge, a digital library of more than 400,000 logos from around the world. And as such, they all in some degree reflect changes in society, according to Bill Gardner, founder of both LogoLounge and Gardner Design.

"Any logo is a symbol, and a symbol conveys something to you for a reason," Gardner says. Take flora. Among the more than 30,000 logos analyzed by Gardner and his team in 2023, a significant number featured flowers, vines, leaves, and other botanical elements. Gardner believes the increase in such logos occurred for the same reason that more than 50 percent of all beverages introduced last year had some sort of floral flavoring: a post-COVID appreciation of health, nature, and the health benefits of nature.

Gardner contends that the growing prominence of asterisks—or rather, half

asterisks, or halfasters, as he calls them—is tied to the symbol's longtime use to indicate footnotes in text. "They've become symbolic of something that's there that we are now disclosing or calling attention to," he says. The fact that a bisected asterisk can also symbolize sparkle (especially when placed atop a diamond, as in the logo for Iowa jeweler Ames Silversmithing) adds to its appeal.

As for Ritz crackers, it's their scalloped shape that Gardner saw repeatedly in logos. Reminiscent of a badge but, thanks to its ruffly circumference, more accessible, the shape calls to mind the imprimatur of a friendly authority.

Yet trends in logo design, and in visual identities overall, also reflect the technology at a designer's disposal, Gardner notes. "When designers are introduced to a new tool, they usually use it in the simplest of fashions. For instance, if they're given a tool that allows them to use a gradient, they'll stick that gradient in a logo and then explore the tool more broadly."

If the logos Gardner reviewed are any indication, designers have also become

more comfortable with blurring tools. And when that mastery of a tool coincides with a societal trend, such as an increased desire for approachability, you have logos such as those for Swedish music platform Blurry and Romanian neural-training firm Veruvis.



Though Gardner calls his annual compendium of such insights a trend report, he takes pains to note that "we're not talking about trendy. We're talking about the trajectory of something. Think of it as evolution." And so, the use of variable fonts within a wordmark highlighted in the 2021 report morphed into 2023's increased use of elongating or expanding just one or two characters in a wordmark. Likewise, the semicircular shapes of 2022's macaroni trend, which suggested both flexibility and

simplicity, evolved into the more complex spiral trend of 2023. The fact that spirals are inherent in nature—the Fibonacci sequence and the golden ratio are apparent in everything from hurricanes to nautilus shells—might also have contributed to their popularity in logos this year, reflecting once again the recent re-emphasis of all things natural and organic.

Another overall trend Gardner has noted is “a crossing of cultures.” “For instance,” he says, “I’m starting to see more Eastern styles of clouds with wind drifting into Western logos. Because we spend so much time on the internet now, it’s so easy for cultures to spread.” At the same time, he admits that his trend reports are relatively Western-centric. He recalls a Russian logo with a washing machine that appeared to be standing on chicken legs, which seemed nonsensical until he became aware of Baba Yaga, a folkloric figure who lives in a house that stands on chicken legs and is as well-known to Slavs as Snow White is in the West. “When you start to think about trends you realize that different places around the world react to things differently,” Gardner says—vital to keep in mind when designing logos for international brands.

Also important to remember is what he calls the “generational gap of symbol



*“It’s not an easy job making sense of all the logos we receive each year—more than 30,000 of them—to put together this report. It’s like the world’s largest match game for myself and a cadre of exceptional designers. . . . The LogoLounge trend report looks back to move us forward—providing invaluable insight developed by countless hours tracking the trajectory of design trends.” — BILL GARDNER*

recognition. Unless you want to appeal to only one generation, [you] have to create meaning in logos that crosses generations.” The lightning bolt that on Greek coins looked more like a sheaf of wheat used to symbolize punishment from Zeus; now zigzag lightning bolts represent brilliant ideas. A somewhat subtler shift, in an appreciably shorter time span, relates to the ellipsis. Thanks to texting, it has morphed from symbolizing “to be continued” or a gap in time to representing someone in the process of typing.

In short, societal changes, cross-pollination of cultures and generations, and technological advances all contribute to trends in logo design. They’re also why “even a company with the most valuable logo is continually tweaking it,” Gardner says.

One such company is Coca-Cola.

The details of its script logo have been modified in numerous ways since its creation in 1887—e.g., the slant of the letters exaggerated and minimized, a ribbon introduced beneath the name—yet throughout these changes it has remained instantly recognizable. Another global brand, Nike, discovered that its Swoosh had become so recognizable, it was able to remove the wordmark entirely from the logo with no ill effects. In fact, removing the four letters might have made the brand even more accessible to consumers in countries that don’t use the Latin alphabet.

“If you’re a good brand, you’re continuing to update the elements of a logo that allow it to remain current and on trend,” Gardner says. “When you see logo changes, that means corporations are being good stewards of their brands.” ■

## TAKE THESE THREE ACTIONS NOW!

### 1

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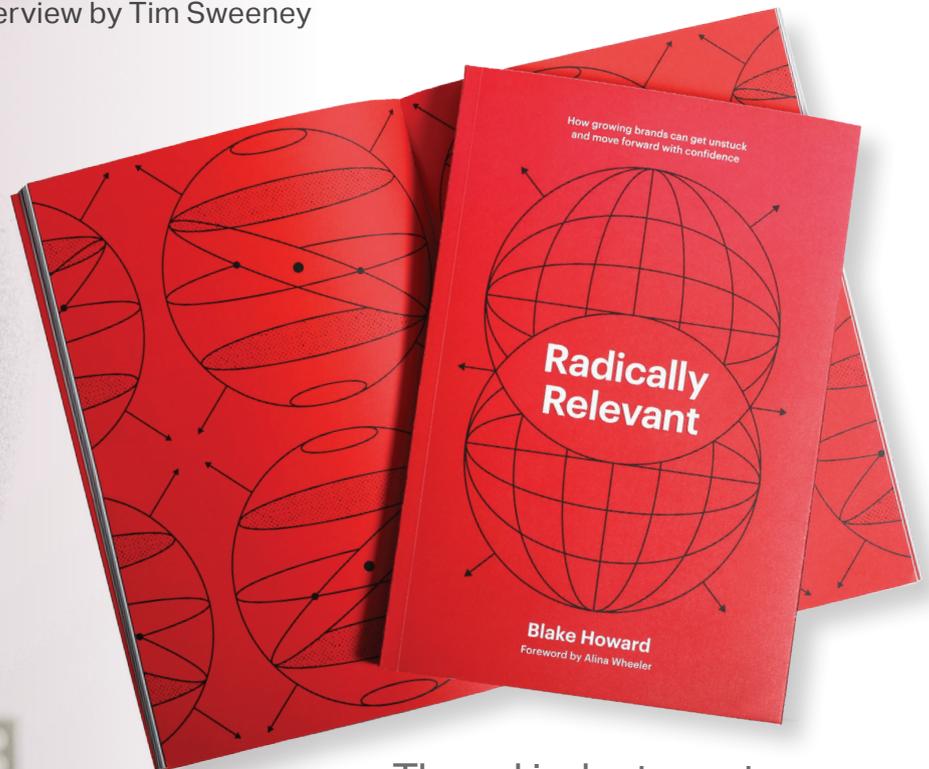
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# Blake Howard Discusses His New Book

## *Radically Relevant*

Interview by Tim Sweeney



The ad industry veteran talks rebranding exercises, the importance of brand clarity, ways to govern your brand identity, and why branding doesn't have to be as complicated as we like to make it.

**B**lake Howard says he authored his new book, *Radically Relevant*, to “condense 20 years of brand strategy, as well as visual and verbal identity thinking, into a single source that could help organizations that are looking to change but aren’t quite sure how.” The cofounder of Matchstic, an Atlanta-based brand identity firm, Howard has spent two decades helping growing companies improve their brand identity, leading numerous brand relaunches for a wide range of clients—from globally recognized brands such as Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Chick-fil-A, and Publix to ambitious start-ups looking to put themselves on the map.

*Radically Relevant* is meant to be a thought starter—or a primer—for having the confidence to move forward, and Howard’s timing is impeccable. As anyone who has dipped even a toe in the marketing pool knows, the ways of communicating with customers are evolving at breakneck speed. Today, stepping into just the shallow end can feel more like leaping onto a moving train.

“People often want to make a change, but they don’t know how, when, or where,” Howard says. “And because everything is changing, rebrands are probably more precious or sensitive. If you get it wrong, the world could be watching, so it feels like there’s more pressure to get it right. At its core, the book is really about helping people figure out where they are and what they need to do next.”

If the idea of another marketing book filled with too many details to wrap your head around is a turnoff, don’t fret. Howard believes that while branding can be complicated, it doesn’t necessarily have to be. In fact, he believes it’s often as simple as being different and being valuable. “The *Radically Relevant* book is designed to simplify what can often be overly complicated and complex,” Howard explains. “As a friend of mine once said, ‘Brand people tend to overcook their omelets.’”

After giving *Radically Relevant* a read, we fired a few questions Howard’s way to give you

insight into what’s behind the book and what you can expect to find inside.

## ON REBRANDING

**Q:** For a rebranding exercise, do you subscribe to building an internal “brand platform” and building blocks that tell the organization what the company stands for and sounds like: mission, values, product promise, etc.?

**BH:** Absolutely. Mission, vision, and values are corporate communication tools that are different from the brand. So, when it comes to developing a brand platform, we help clients think through brand personality—attributes that simply articulate how they should show up in the world. We then work on brand positioning. That means asking, “Compared to a very tightly defined competitive landscape, how are we going to tell our story differently?” We also create audience personas, and we work through a psychographic persona where it’s more about the mindset and determining whom we are designing the brand for. We think that’s absolutely essential for creating alignment inside the organization about what it is we’re trying to represent out in the market. That platform then becomes an anchor before

getting into subjective, creative territory such as names, visuals, or verbals.

**Q:** In the book, you list the things that a brand is and is not, including that a brand is what others say about you, not what you say about yourself. Where do you see the crossover between what a company thinks it should look like, sound like, or behave like and the customer’s opinion of that company?

**BH:** The two are absolutely connected. Too many people think it’s only about what the company says the brand represents, and they fail to realize that it’s a two-way marketplace. There’s often a gap between how companies want to be known and how they are actually known. The idea is to define how you want to be known and then make strategic, tactical decisions that can make that a reality. For example, if you want to be a trusted brand, make sure you treat your design in a credible, trustworthy manner; don’t go wild with your aesthetic, which could send mixed messages. Once you’ve defined how you want to be known in the market, make smart decisions on how you should show up to reinforce how you want to be known and, of course, deliver on those promises. Over time, you can shrink the >



gap between how you want to be known and how you're actually known.

**Q: If a company does the “brand platform” exercise, should their baseline be where they are in their customers’ eyes now (reality) or where they want to go (be the market leader, for example)?**

**BH:** Brand strategy is about defining both the ideal and the future. There's certainly a nod to the current reality of where you're coming from, because you don't want to be tone-deaf to that. However, it is also about creating signposts that point you in the right direction of where you want to ultimately head in the future. Sometimes, when a brand such as Twitter rebrands to X and is going to be this all-in-one, new platform that's going to blow our minds, it doesn't really pass the sniff test. It's maybe too far into the future, and we need some specificity. So, it is about the ideal; however, you do need to know how you're currently being perceived by consumers so that you can bread crumb and lead them along the way without jumping too far too fast. A big part of the Radically Relevant model is based on what consumers are looking for. So, the relevant side is very much about speaking value to them, not just tooting your own horn.

## CREATING BUY-IN

**Q: You write about the need to organize offerings that are meaningful to the**

**audience, not based on internal politics. Any advice on how marketers can remove or limit the politics from these decisions?**

**BH:** If it's a big enterprise, it's going to be hard to get everyone in the loop and involved, so education is a large piece, as well as making sure executives have bought in to the need for good, clear brand communications. If you have air cover from executive backing and endorsement, then you can educate and slowly change the internal culture over time. In a smaller organization, it's beneficial to bring the squeaky wheels into the fold to make sure they feel heard and understood. Slowly, through that experience you can educate them and make decisions as you go in an attempt to find a win-win. People are used to doing things a certain way, so there's definitely a change management psychology behind many internal politics.

## STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

**Q: One of the Super Six you list in the book is Distinction—standing out from the competition. Is there a fine line between examining—or worrying about—what the competition is doing and deciding who you are and what your brand represents?**

**BH:** In the book, I say, “Don't sacrifice CLARITY on the altar of DISTINCTION.” First and foremost, you need to be super clear, which is a pretty basic need. Then, distinction is also important, but I think people overindex on looking at their competition and being too worried about what they're doing. Being authentic and matching the brand expression with mission,

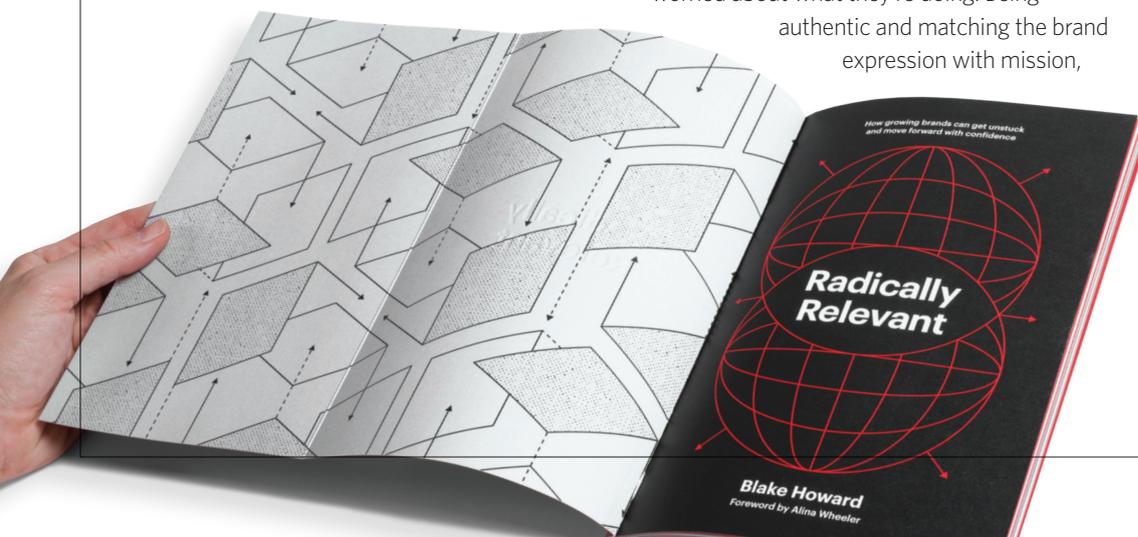
and values are most important. However, distinction is key for brands that are trying to break out. Liquid Death is an example of a water brand that is completely bananas and weird, but they sure are making headway, and it's just because they're super different. I don't think they're sitting around worrying about their competition. They saw an opportunity to tell a different story through the name of the company and their visuals and, really, the theme of the entire brand.

**Q: When you do a competitor analysis for a brand you work with, how do you advise them on this topic?**

**BH:** We can make decisions that best match the brand platform, and we can make decisions that maximize opportunities noticed in the market. Often, we'll see things like jargon phrases being used frequently in their marketplace, so we'll try to avoid those. Or maybe everyone is blue and red in a market, so let's explore green because one of our attributes is connected to growth and so that makes sense. From brand voice and color to the overall look and feel, we definitely leverage competitive opportunities and try to put that into the work.

**Q: You write about finding the “one thing” for a brand to be remembered for. This can be challenging for internal brand teams whose time is requested by various departments or product teams, for example. Any tips on how to narrow the focus when the requests are coming from all angles?**

**BH:** Sometimes we do a five-year-old exercise, where you ask, “What's the value that we provide?” Someone may respond with, “We provide high-quality e-commerce solutions.” The trick is to keep asking, “Why?” (like a five-year-old would) to get to a simpler version of the story. What I like about this exercise is that it elevates above individual products, features, or campaigns, and it gets to this higher level of “Why do we actually exist?”



**Q: Two of the categories that determine a Radically Relevant brand are Attraction and Devotion. Today, brands attempt to align (and share) their values with the perceived opinions and values of their audience. Do you see this trend continuing?**

**BH:** It depends on the brand and the organization. Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. It's mostly based on your audience—who they are and what they want. If it's a nonprofit that is working on global sustainability, their audience is going to really care about the mission of the nonprofits they support, their belief systems, and their point of view on broader topics than just their mission as an organization. At that point, it makes sense to extend and share your values. But when it comes to consumer brands, I do think that's a bit of a trend. I think people have responded to the events of the last five years, and many brands have tried to capitalize on trends that are mostly polarizing political topics, but they're choosing a side so that they can cash in on it. People are starting to smell the inauthenticity there and the virtue signaling, which is a big turnoff. When it adds value and is relevant to whatever your value proposition is, it's great to be authentic and share your belief systems, but when it's irrelevant to the value you provide, it's off-putting. It's also difficult because a brand is not a one-dimensional, single person—a brand is often made up of and supported by hundreds of people internally. So, to pick a side is challenging for employees and for teams. Individuals have opinions; brands don't always have to. That doesn't have to mean brands are insensitive, but they should be more critical about what's authentic and what's simply opportunistic.

## BRAND GUIDELINES

**Q: The book discusses the clever idea of appointing a governor of the brand who acts as a source, not the police. What brands have implemented this, and how has it worked?**

**BH:** Publix is where I first got this idea. They have 60+ people on their in-house creative services team, with multiple creative directors. We worked with the executive creative director to help put together brand guidelines, and his posture was to not give a bunch of dos and don'ts and paint a picture of what's wrong, but to let the brand guidelines act as inspiration instead—to be a source to reference what works best. We ended up presenting everything that was the bright spot of how the brand should come together. I always liked that it was really more about inspiration and less about policing. They also do monthly huddles and reviews where teams share creative work and talk about it, so that is a chance to get inspired about what's working best. Chick-fil-A also does monthly and quarterly "brand schools" where they share work and discuss what's working best. That's another example of being a great source of inspiration instead of being an auditor looking to catch someone making a mistake.

**Q: Every brand has visual guidelines, templates, and fonts, but tone of voice can be challenging to govern with numerous individuals speaking on behalf of the brand—copywriters, HR, social media, agencies, sales reps, and, in some cases, even brand store employees. How do you recommend constructing the brand voice?**

**BH:** It's a matter of knowing the cultural reality of the organization and understanding where your consumers or customers are coming from. If it's a tech business that offers solutions in a high-stress environment, having a fluffy, soft voice is not sensitive to where your customers are coming from. It's three parts: being authentic to the company, understanding where your customer is coming from, and understanding the competitive landscape. There's often a huge opportunity to define your brand voice in a unique way based on avoiding certain slogans, tropes, and jargon used in your industry. There are a number of ways to construct a brand voice, but we tend to

use brand attributes made up of really simple adjectives, and then we define those in a way that makes sense tonally and from a writing or tactical perspective. If we want to be bold, we'll use short, pithy phrases for headlines. If we're approachable, we try to write at a fifth-grade level and make it plainspoken and down-to-earth. Another approach is to create a brand archetype, like we are "the Explorer" or "the Bright-Hearted Host." Those can be a little more ethereal and harder to write from, but that process can work as well.

**Q: Finally, you write about the importance of regular brand "checkups." How do good brands implement this action?**

**BH:** I think "brand school" is great, and Loom videos or other recorded training videos of someone going through the vision of the brand are an easy way to implement that. Regardless of how it's done, an orientation or brand school at the right rhythm is important, and creative summits like the Publix example are key for sharing and realigning on brand vision. ■

## HOW RADICAL AND RELEVANT IS YOUR BRAND?

**Take the Radically Relevant Online Assessment Today! (Free, no obligation.)**

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Brands We Love

## FIELD NOTES®



**A** celebrity in the graphic design world, **Aaron Draplin** has plied his trade for an impressive list of globally recognized brands. He even teaches seminars on the subject to aspiring designers, many of whom have been inspired by his work and charisma to pursue the same career track. Nowadays, however, Draplin is probably just as well-known for cofounding Field Notes as he is for his design acumen.

Field Notes—which Draplin cofounded with his friend Jim Coudal—designs, prints, and manufactures memo notebooks, press sheets, pens, pencils, and other related accessories. The company was inspired by the small promo books, manuals, and agricultural memo books that Draplin discovered on a journey across the American heartland more than 15 years ago. Listening to him talk about these items, it's clear he has a genuine soft spot for the small slices of Americana that were a part of daily life for the farmers of decades past. He also seems to understand that his affinity for something like a pocket-

size corn grower guide from 1930 might seem a little, well, corny to some. Then again, if the success of Field Notes is any indication, plenty of folks are just as sentimental.

"This whole thing starts all the way back in 1993 in my excursion leaving the Midwest to go west, and all the warts and moles in between—junking, hitting estate sales and flea markets along the way," Draplin explains in a Field Notes brand video. "I would find these (little notebooks and field notes books) and use them to draw."

He began to collect, or as he says, "rescue them," from obscurity. Inspired by the designs of the pocket-size books he had discovered/rescued, the Portland, Oregon-based Draplin made up a batch of 200 small notebooks by hand and gave them to friends as Christmas gifts in 2007. One of them was Coudal, who was perfectly happy leading his highly successful ad agency in Chicago, Coudal Partners. Coudal told Draplin that he thought there might be something desirable in the notebooks. A few weeks later, Field Notes

was launched by Draplin Design Company and Coudal Partners. They made 500 three packs of pocket-size notebooks to start—and sold them all in no time.

Today, the company is based in Chicago, and every one of their products is manufactured in the United States. The paper is hand selected for each new design and sourced from mills in the Midwest. The inks are US sourced as well. The original notebook that Draplin designed by hand is still for sale at [fieldnotesbrand.com](http://fieldnotesbrand.com). Like most of their books, it's a 48-page memo book available with graph, ruled, or plain paper. At three and a half inches wide and five and a half inches tall, it fits in most pockets, and it has a five-inch ruler inside the back cover. Some people use them to write down their grocery lists. Others, like Draplin, draw in them. Some folks just use them to jot down reminders of things or ideas they want to easily recall later.

Today, Field Notes products are sold in hundreds of retail locations around the world, from the unexpected (surf shops) to the expected (stationery shops and bookstores). For \$120, you can skip the retail process and get a yearlong subscription that includes multiple packs of all four Quarterly Limited Editions, 10 percent off any other purchases,



free shipping inside the United States, and other “surprises.” The basic Original Kraft notebook is sold in three packs for \$12.95 online. Field Notes has partnered with brands such as Canada Goose, Starbucks, Carhartt, L.L. Bean, Tommy Hilfiger, and more.

Field Notes may have grown well past those first 500 notebooks in the last 15 years, but it still comes across online as a person-to-person company that looks after the details. The slogan at the bottom of the Field Notes website reads: “I’m not writing it down to remember it later, I’m writing it down to remember it now.” The quote came from Coudal’s grandfather, who used to tear off pieces of the newspaper because the simple act of doing so would help him remember a thought.

The Field Notes website overall is focused on both the end consumer and the notebook details. The “Dispatches” section—essentially a blog with posts about special offers happening in real time—uses clever tactics to drive return visitors. Road Trip Wednesday, on July 27, 2023, for example, offered a set of five Great Lakes Colortone Postcards and an “old-school” National Parks Water Transfer Decal free with your order. Just about every item on the site comes with a 10 percent discount for subscribers.

Clicking on any of the individual Field Notes products will give you insight into the design inspiration, the chosen paper, any special finishing, and the production of the booklets. Each description is worth the read to discover what makes the individual booklets and limited-edition sets unique.

One of the coolest features is the imagery collection of agricultural notebooks, product guides, and more gathered at the bottom of the “Our Story” section of the website. It features vintage product guides for fertilizer and seeding corn, various memo books, and miscellaneous farmers’ pocket ledgers, such as one from something called “American Field & Hog Fence.” These were Draplin’s inspiration.

On social media, the @fieldnotesbrand Instagram account is chock-full of beautifully shot product photos, creatively executed reels showing how products are made, and posts

announcing contest winners and the products they’ve won. Leading up to Father’s Day, the account featured posts of ideal products for dads, as well as some humorous ones that conveyed the Field Notes brand personality, which seems to not take itself too seriously. The mainstream media have taken notice of the brand’s rise as well, with coverage from the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Magazine*, *Fast Company*, *New York Magazine*, and *WIRED*.

Field Notes also creates original video content. Some films tell the stories behind collaborations with various artists and designers who have created the different notebooks. Draplin himself is frequently featured in videos that explain how he arrived at the most recent theme of a new notebook series and how he might have personally chosen the designer and the paper.

The brand uses its email newsletter to deliver special offers, which are sometimes hidden at the bottom to incentivize people to open and keep reading. In May 2023, they offered a chance to be entered into a drawing to win “one of 25 long sold-out Lunacy Edition 4-packs.” A corresponding blog post on the website says that “only 14% of customers paid attention to that hint in the email.” Meaning: you should have entered because you would have had a great chance of winning. Clever.

Field Notes also drops limited releases called Quarterly Editions four times per year, each with a new design theme or paper. Themes have included the Great Lakes and streetscapes of American urban architecture.

The 59th Quarterly Edition notebook launched in summer 2023, called “Foiled Again,” was a tribute to the printing process of hot-foil stamping. Our favorite release: a collaboration with Hatch Show Print, the famed Nashville letterpress print shop started in 1879 that specializes in concert posters. The notebooks themselves aren’t just filled with blank pages for you to fill up; the limited-edition series often features trivia facts related to the theme or an essay by a writer the staff knows. The Great Lakes limited-edition notebook even comes with a foldout map.

While modern-day farmers may not rely on foldout maps, it’s entirely likely that the flea market gems of yesteryear that inspired Draplin and Coudal are coming full circle today. No doubt there are more than a few Midwest farmers in 2023 with Field Notes notebooks tucked into their chest pockets as they go about their daily tasks—a romantic image that Draplin must appreciate. ■

#### Why do we love the Field Notes brand?

- Partnerships with artists and designers to create original designs and artwork for each new release
- Appreciation for and use of specialty papers selected for production of each new Field Notes booklet or set of booklets
- Unique print techniques
- Online film archive featuring the inspiration, artist, and production notes behind each Quarterly Edition
- Who doesn’t love print? Especially these wonderful pocket notebooks!

**WIN A YEARLONG SUBSCRIPTION to FIELD NOTES®** Receive the current 2023 Quarterly Edition and the next three upcoming quarterly sets!



Scan the QR code or register for this giveaway at:

[sqone.net/giveaway](https://sqone.net/giveaway)



AUDITS

# MARKETING AUDITS

## for the New Year

By Sherry Chiger

**F**or many of us, the very word *audit* is intimidating, conjuring images of numbers-packed spreadsheets and sums that never seem to add up the same way twice. Put *marketing* in front of it, and now you have an even more daunting term. Yet conducting regular marketing audits and marketing asset audits—ideally once a year, according to most experts—is a key to profitably growing and maintaining your business.

Fortunately, conducting a marketing audit isn't as complicated as you might fear. "It just involves taking a careful look at all the efforts you've got in place," says marketing consultant **Susan Tyson**, who specializes in conducting audits. "Start by

looking at the very big picture: your goals, target audience, how well you understand them, how well you're communicating your brand message. From there you can drill down and look at the individual channels. Take a look at all your campaigns, what works, and what could be improved—your email campaigns, your websites, your sales collateral, etc."

If that still sounds like too much of a hassle or a strain on your already-tight resources, consider the costs of not regularly auditing your marketing. For starters, we all know the axiom about not being able to improve what we don't measure. If you can't qualify your goals and quantify the ROI of the marketing efforts you're making to

reach those goals, you're all but guaranteed to be overspending on some tactics and underspending on—or flat out overlooking—others. "There could be marketing efforts going on that because they've been around for so long, you forgot they're there," Tyson says. "There could be programs you had instituted some time ago and maybe stopped using but you're still paying for."

By the same token, without knowing what marketing assets you have access to, you could end up scrambling when the time comes to implement a new program or campaign, says **Colleen Sabatino** of consultancy Sabatino Marketing LLC. "You need to be sure you have the freelancers, content, and other resources necessary to achieve your goals." Otherwise, you might find yourself scrambling at the last minute, "and that could cost you more if you have to rush to meet a deadline. At the same time, when you see what you already have to work with, that could change the direction of your marketing."

Conducting your marketing audit now, as you prepare to close out your books at the end of the year, will equip you to make the new year successful. So, let's get started.

### Top-Level Audit: Marketing and Marketing Asset Audit

Some people use *marketing audit* and *marketing asset audit* interchangeably. They aren't interchangeable! A *marketing asset audit* is a physical audit in which you inventory and analyze your entire library of marketing assets, tools, and skills. Throughout this process, you'll gauge whether your found assets are sufficient to use into the future by determining their past purpose and success as well as future viability and useability. This audit should include assets that are both physical and digital: sales and marketing collateral and content (print and digital), landing pages, blogs, video and images, facility signage,

trade show materials, branded merchandise, etc. Most audit specialists advise including the members of your marketing team and their specific skills as assets. A colleague's knowledge of Figma, Photoshop, InDesign, or HubSpot may not be tangible, but it's definitely an asset that is being used to achieve goals.

A *marketing audit* identifies and reviews marketing functions and tactics. We suggest structuring it as a series of smaller, focused audits of your marketing efforts: digital marketing, marketing automation, marketing channels, event marketing, blog posting, CRM, SEO, analytics, etc. Document existing benchmarks, goals, objectives, marketing processes, assigned owners, etc.

Both audits should conclude with a performance evaluation and a look-back report on conformity and execution.

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### Top-Level Audit: Goals

Most likely, your organization has some top-level goals: to increase the top line X percent and the bottom-line Y percent. But what are the supporting goals that will enable your business to reach these overall goals? Perhaps it's growing your customer base, increasing your average order value, generating repeat orders from existing clients, winning a new audience, expanding your product line, boosting web traffic, or,

**Each supporting goal is apt to require a different suite of marketing assets and functions.**

most likely, some combination thereof. Be specific about the parameters you'll use to determine success: for instance, "within 12 months we will increase our customer file of active buyers by 8 percent without exceeding a customer acquisition cost of \$12.50, and at least half those new customers will be from businesses with more than 500 employees."

Each supporting goal is apt to require a different suite of marketing assets and functions. If you intend to attract more younger customers, you likely want to invest more in social media and ensure you have the SEO keywords in place to attract them to your website, whereas if your top priority is increasing your average order value, you might want to promote product bundles at the point of sale. But don't worry about which assets you need for each goal just yet. At this point you want to simply rank these goals by highest to lowest priority, with key performance indicators for each.

### Top-Level Audit: Audience

Once this goal audit is completed, you want to analyze your audience. You can't be confident that you have the optimal marketing assets if you can't define your target audience. Don't forget that audiences change over time, as do their media consumption habits. The customers who accounted for the lion's share of your revenue three years ago might have aged out of your offering. Or maybe the psychographics of your target market >



remained the same but these individuals no longer respond to the same types of marketing: those who relied most heavily on, say, search engines the last time you conducted audience research might now turn to blogs and influencers before making a purchase.

As you well know, the ways to define and segment your customer base are almost limitless. Less important than how you identify your customers—by demographics, psychographics, firmographics, or behavior—is that you do so, period, and then compare your target audience with your existing one. Only then can you assess the gaps between the audiences you need to reach to achieve your goals and the audiences you have—and from there determine which marketing tools will help close those gaps.

### Top-Level Audit: Competitors

Hand in hand with defining your target market is analyzing your competitors, in keeping with the axiom “Keep your customers close and your competitors closer.” We dedicated a previous article to this topic (“Competitive Research: Understanding the Who, What, Where, and When of Your Competition,” Q2 2023 issue of *ONE:ONE*). When homing in on your competitors within your target markets, catalog which marketing tools they use. This could reveal opportunities they’re taking advantage of that you’re overlooking. A direct competitor that has for years been mailing print catalogs to an audience nearly identical to yours clearly has found the practice profitable, so perhaps you should test the catalog waters as well.

### Campaigns, Assets, and Data

Now it’s time to examine your current marketing plan, the campaigns within it, and the channels used to carry them out. When listing each marketing campaign, be sure to map it back to at least one of your supporting goals. If a campaign doesn’t benefit any of them, note that. Perhaps you’ll discover you overlooked an ongoing goal, such as maintaining your share of voice in your market sector. Or maybe you’ll conclude that this particular program should be modified to serve one of your supporting goals or even terminated. Likewise, every marketing channel used by your organization and every asset within each channel should support at least one campaign.

Once you complete this portion of your audit, you’ll know what you have in terms of assets and campaigns. Congratulations! But—and you knew there was a “but” coming—this information is not actionable if you don’t know how successful the marketing programs and campaigns have been.

Measuring the success of your marketing efforts might entail gathering less-than-obvious metrics. Let’s say your organic Instagram posts about your annual widget sale generated twice the online sales as your organic Facebook posts about the same sale, despite appreciably more people seeing the Facebook posts. Taken at face value, that would suggest expending more resources on Instagram than Facebook. But a deeper dig might reveal that the Facebook link to your website’s sale page was broken or that other, more successful Facebook posts used in situ photography rather than the straight-on product shot in the underperforming post. Or an email campaign that at first glance might appear

successful could have generated enough unsubscribes and spam reports to impact list size and even deliverability going forward. Or your email response might have dropped significantly, but only after you introduced a seemingly successful SMS campaign that did little more than cannibalize your email sales. In a marketing audit, as in marketing, nothing exists in a vacuum.

### And . . . Action!

Now you have the information you need to map out your marketing efforts for the coming year with confidence that each effort will support one of your goals. The metrics will show whether unprofitable campaigns need to be updated, revamped, or terminated—and if the latter, whether that means you can eliminate the production of certain assets. For instance, if the data indicates that a certain affiliate program should be discontinued, you no longer need to produce digital assets in the requisite dimensions if they’re not used for anything else.

Conversely, if you opt to proceed with a new program or channel, your catalog of assets can show you what elements you already have and what you still need to create. If you’re launching a print catalog, for instance, you might have enough product and lifestyle photography among your digital assets that you don’t need to set up a new photo shoot or you just need a smaller, less expensive shoot than anticipated.

“People tend to jump to add things without analyzing what they have,” Sabatino says. “Something else people get wrong is not mapping back to their goals. Just accumulating assets, if they’re not working toward the goals you have set, isn’t

**When homing in on your competitors within your target markets, catalog which marketing tools they use. This could reveal opportunities they’re taking advantage of that you’re overlooking.**

worthwhile. Your marketing audit and asset audit are almost like a checklist: Yes, I have this. No, I don't have this. What would it cost to get that?"

Sabatino compares conducting an annual audit to spring cleaning. "Nobody wants to do it, but once you do, you realize what a difference it can make."

**Sabatino compares conducting an annual audit to spring cleaning. "Nobody wants to do it, but once you do, you realize what a difference it can make."**

### **In-House or Outsource?**

When opting to conduct a marketing audit in-house, organizations generally have two reasons for doing so: it costs less to use staff than to hire an outside consultant, and no outside consultant can possibly know your business as well as you do. Yet both of those can be compelling reasons to turn to a third-party expert to lend assistance or perform your audit.

By viewing your marketing tools and efforts from an entirely new point of view, an outside source might suggest approaches and tactics that might never have occurred to you or that you didn't even know about (after all, if you had, you might have already tried them). A third party will undoubtedly have firsthand experience with tools and methodologies that worked for other businesses, both within your market sector and outside it.

Outsiders might also have innovative ways to measure your results and be able to see, from their more distanced and

impartial point of view, how one campaign affects another. What's more, because they're not as close to your business as you are, they can have a better sense of how your customers and prospects—who, after all, are also outside parties—are receiving and interpreting your messages. To you, as the creator of the marketing campaigns, it might seem obvious how your catalogs and e-newsletters are communicating your unique selling proposition. But an outsider can point out where that message isn't clear.

And because they don't know how much blood, sweat, and tears went into creating a particular campaign or how much the owner's spouse loves the postcard creative, an impartial auditor will find it easier to be brutally honest about what appears to be working and what isn't. Writers from William Faulkner to Stephen King have said how important it is to be ruthless and "kill your darlings"—favorite turns of phrase, characters, and subplots that don't benefit a piece of writing. It's just as important, especially to your bottom line, to do the same with your marketing campaigns and assets. Doing so isn't easy, of course, which is why writers have editors and marketers and turn to third-party auditors.

As for the other reason some businesses give for conducting audits in-house—that it's cheaper to do so—this may very well be a false economy. For one thing, what will be the cost to your business to take a few employees away from their existing tasks to perform the marketing audit? "The biggest challenge is that people just don't do the audits," says Tyson. "They're very often relegated to the very bottom of the task list."

For another, the same fresh perspective and lack of attachment to the status quo that a third party brings to analyzing your marketing also enables them to discover cost savings along with new, more profitable tactics—all of which can pay for the expense of hiring the outside auditor while also improving your marketing. ■



## Marketing Asset Audit

**TIP!**

Wondering what to include in your audit?

Following is a not-quite-

comprehensive list of assets for you to catalog as you complete your marketing asset audit:

- ✓ The website and the various pages within, from home page to specific landing pages
- ✓ SEO keywords—and the tools to continually discover potentially more effective ones
- ✓ Paid search campaign assets
- ✓ Blog posts
- ✓ Testimonials and reviews
- ✓ White papers
- ✓ Catalogs, other direct mail pieces, and mailing lists
- ✓ Sales guides and brochures and collateral
- ✓ Social media accounts
- ✓ Email templates
- ✓ Videos and print and digital photography
- ✓ Facility signage
- ✓ HR and employee internal communications
- ✓ Print and digital ads
- ✓ Letterhead and business cards
- ✓ Client onboarding checklists
- ✓ Contact center upselling scripts
- ✓ Logos, icons, and other graphics
- ✓ Sampling programs
- ✓ Influencer programs
- ✓ Affiliate programs
- ✓ Third-party marketing vendor programs



Kathi Rowzie

President | Two Sides North America

What you should know about:

**Circular Life Cycle**  
**Sustainable Forestry**  
**Biobased Energy**  
**Efficient Water Use**  
**High Recycling Rate**

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### 1 IT ALL STARTS WITH PAPER!

Did you know that print is the only form of communication rooted in a truly circular, sustainable life cycle? It's a life cycle that relies on renewable biobased energy, and boasts some of the highest recycling rates.

### 2 RECYCLING POPULARITY



Paper products are recycled more than any other material in the US municipal solid-waste stream. The United States recovers 68 percent of its paper products for recycling, and that number jumps to 94 percent for cardboard boxes (American Forest and Paper Association, 2023).

### 3 CIRCULAR LIFE CYCLE



Paper is, in fact, one of the few products on earth that already has an environmentally sustainable, circular life cycle. It's made from an infinitely renewable natural resource (trees) that is purposefully grown, harvested, and regrown in sustainably managed forests.

### 4 +18 MILLION ACRES



According to the US Forest Service (USFS), the nation's forests grow approximately two times more tree volume than is harvested each year. In its most recent Global Forest Resources Assessment, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that net forest area in the United States increased by approximately 18 million acres over the past 30 years. The FAO specifically stated that sustainably harvesting trees to make products that benefit society, including paper, is not considered deforestation, because the trees will grow back.

### 5 FOREST ECOSYSTEM



Far beyond simply replanting trees, the sustainable forestry practices and forest management certification systems advocated for by the paper industry are designed to protect the entire forest ecosystem, from wildlife and habitat to water and soil quality. Sustainable forestry yields benefits for the climate as well. In addition to enhancing forest ecosystem services, the USFS reports that sustainable forest management can actually increase the ability of forests to sequester atmospheric carbon.

### 6 RENEWABLE BIOENERGY



Because paper is manufactured using mostly renewable bioenergy (64 percent on average in the United States), the EPA reports that the pulp and paper industry is responsible for less than 0.6 percent of total US greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, the paper and forest products industry produces more renewable bioenergy than any other industry in the country.

### 7 RECYCLED WATER



While it's true that paper manufacturing uses a great deal of water, very little of it is consumed in the process. In a typical paper mill, process water is recycled 10 times or more, then it's cleaned to meet strict government water-quality standards before approximately 90 percent is returned to its source. About 1 percent remains in the manufactured paper, and the rest simply evaporates back into the environment. Roughly 90 percent of chemicals used in the kraft pulping process are recovered and recycled.

Strong demand for sustainably sourced paper products provides a powerful economic incentive for millions of landowners to keep their land forested and sustainably managed rather than converting or selling it for non-forest uses such as urban development, which, according to the USFS, is the leading cause of deforestation in the United States.

## PAPERMAKING IS AN INHERENTLY SUSTAINABLE PROCESS



In addition to being the most recycled material in North America, paper is part of an industry that sustainably grows and regrows its own raw material (wood fiber from trees); derives most of the energy to drive its processes from renewable, carbon-neutral biofuel; and cleans and returns more than 90 percent of the water it uses to the environment.

You can find facts cited in this article and more at [twosidesna.org/two-sides-fact-sheet](https://twosidesna.org/two-sides-fact-sheet)





# Who knew emojis could be soooooo influential?

Square One  
111 Gaither Drive, Suite 104  
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

Emojis can boost Instagram engagement by **48%**.

Source: Quintly



Emojis can increase X (formerly known as Twitter) engagement by over **25%**.

Source: Wordstream



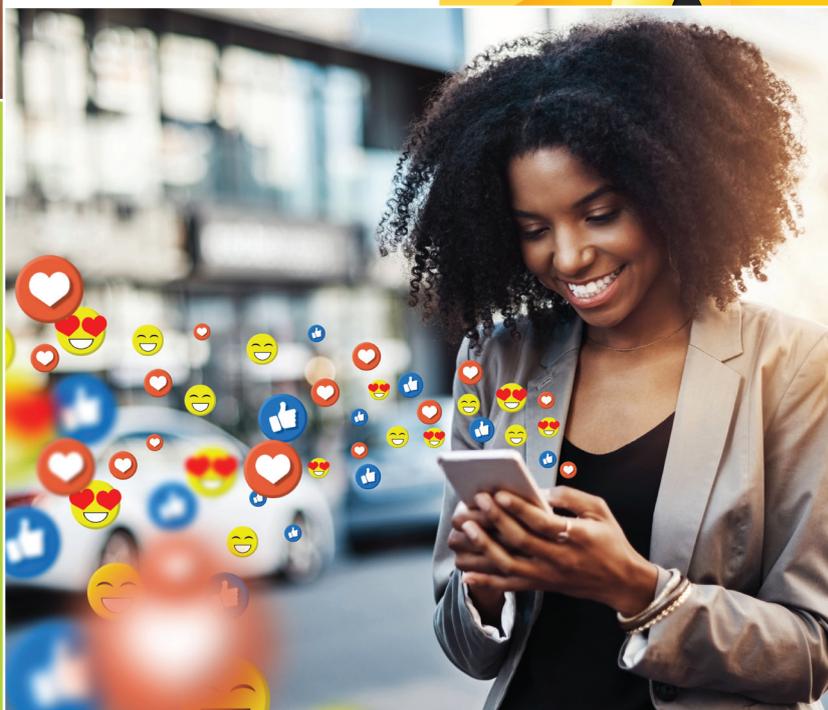
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## Top five most frequently used emojis by generation.

Source: Brandwatch Consumer Research

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
<b>Baby Boomers</b>					
<b>Gen X</b>					
<b>Gen Y</b>					
<b>Gen Z</b>					



Using emoticons in your Facebook posts can generate **57% more likes, 33% more comments, and 33% more shares.**

Source: AmEx Open Forum and Zazzle Media