

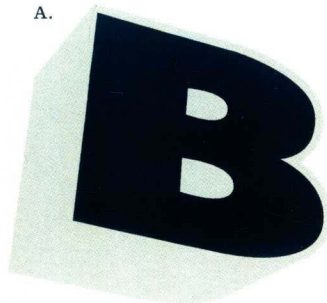
# BRAND BUILD

EDITED BY  
DEBBIE  
MILLMAN

THE COMPLETE GUIDE *TO* BUILDING,  
DESIGNING, *AND* SUSTAINING BRANDS

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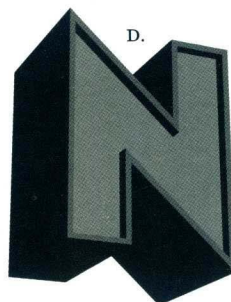
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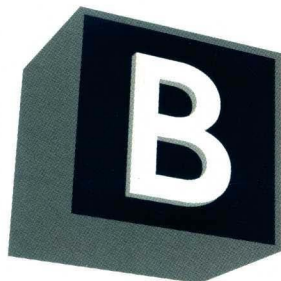
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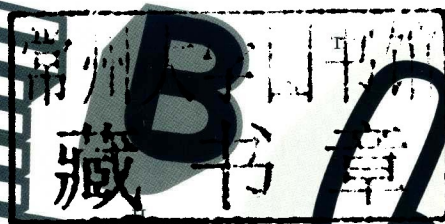
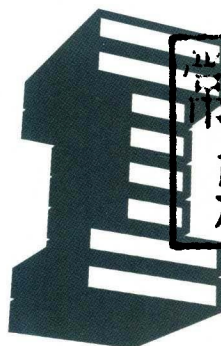
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RODRIGO CORRAL DESIGN

# FOREWORD

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What do the words *brand* and *bible* have in common? Branding is storytelling elevated to narrative, often embellished with myth to enhance a product's identity. The branding story, conveyed through signs, symbols, and other elements, results in a manufactured legacy that appeals to consumers. *Bible* is storytelling elevated to narrative and mythically embellished to appeal to adherents' faith. Brand and bible are indeed linked by intention, if not function.

The Bible is a collection of origin stories. Some of it can be taken literally, while other parts can be considered symbolically. *Brand Bible* is also a collection of origin stories. Here, they can be taken literally, as they present part history, part commentary. Yet branding is not pure truth or even partial truth. The histories of most branded products should never be accepted at face value. To brand a product means to impose a personality, character, and heritage that will ultimately influence the way the branded product, institution, or object is perceived by the public. Devising, maintaining, and perpetuating the myth is job number one of branding experts.

So, what should the reader of the *Brand Bible* expect—fact or fiction?

# BRAND BIBLE

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## THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUILDING, DESIGNING, AND SUSTAINING BRANDS

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6 *foreword* **STEVEN HELLER**    10 *introduction* **DEBBIE MILLMAN**

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### CONTENTS

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PART ONE/  
**BUILDING  
BRANDS**

CHAPTER 01	14	MEANINGFUL MARKINGS AND THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD
CHAPTER 02	20	FRUITS OF THE ELIZABETHAN ERA
CHAPTER 03	30	POTTER'S GOLD
CHAPTER 04	40	TRADEMARKS AND THE GROWTH OF CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS
CHAPTER 05	64	THE BEGINNING OF MANUFACTURER BRANDS
CHAPTER 06	82	BREAKING THE MOLD: COCO CHANEL, KRUEGER BEER, AND LACOSTE
CHAPTER 07	92	THE GREATEST GENERATION OF BRANDS
CHAPTER 08	102	THE EVOLUTION OF REVOLUTION
CHAPTER 09	116	BRAND IDENTITY, CONSUMER EXPERIENCE, AND THE INTERCONNECTED PACKAGE
CHAPTER 10	132	BRANDADAPTATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
CHAPTER 11	148	EMERGING MARKETS: BRIC AND BEYOND

---

PART TWO/  
**SUSTAINING  
BRANDS**

CHAPTER 12	166	<b>RIDE ME:</b> The Evolution of Branding for Transportation
CHAPTER 13	178	<b>CHOOSE ME:</b> The Evolution of Branding Retail Environments
CHAPTER 14	186	<b>USE ME:</b> The Evolution of Branding Appliances
CHAPTER 15	192	<b>PRETTY ON THE OUTSIDE:</b> The Evolution of Branding Beauty
CHAPTER 16	202	<b>THIRST:</b> The Evolution of Branding Beverages
CHAPTER 17	212	<b>UNPLUGGED:</b> The Evolution of Branding Electronics
CHAPTER 18	220	<b>A BRAND CALLED YOU:</b> The Evolution of Multimedia Brands and Beyond

---



---

**PART THREE/**  
**DESIGNING**  
**BRANDS**

	CHAPTER 19
228	<b>HOW TO BRAND A BOOK:</b> Q&A with Rodrigo Corral, Rodrigo Corral Design
	CHAPTER 20
234	<b>HOW TO BRAND A RESTAURANT:</b> Q&A with Matteo Bologna, Mucca Design
	CHAPTER 21
240	<b>HOW TO BRAND A PAPER PRODUCT:</b> Q&A with Christine Mau, Kimberly-Clark Company (Kleenex)
	CHAPTER 22
246	<b>HOW TO BRAND USABILITY:</b> Q&A with Dan Formosa, Smart Design (OXO)
	CHAPTER 23
250	<b>HOW TO BRAND A HOTEL:</b> Q&A with Scott Williams (Starwood Properties)
	CHAPTER 24
254	<b>HOW TO BRAND PACKAGED FOOD:</b> Q&A with Rob Wallace, Wallace Church (Lean Cuisine)
	CHAPTER 25
260	<b>HOW TO BRAND A BEVERAGE:</b> Q&A with Mike Bainbridge, Sterling Brands (Tropicana)
	CHAPTER 26
266	<b>HOW TO BRAND A DEPARTMENT STORE:</b> Q&A with Michael Bierut, Pentagram (Saks Fifth Avenue)
	CHAPTER 27
270	<b>HOW TO BRAND A CITY:</b> Q&A with Joyce Rutter Kaye, NYC & Company (New York City)
	CHAPTER 28
274	<b>HOW TO BRAND A CULTURAL INSTITUTION:</b> Q&A with Rob Giampietro, Project Projects (SALT)
	CHAPTER 29
278	<b>HOW TO BRAND PRINT:</b> Q&A with Gail Anderson, SpotCo (Various)
	CHAPTER 30
282	<b>HOW TO BRAND A NONPROFIT:</b> Q&A with Jennifer Kinon and Bobby C. Martin, Jr., OCD (Girl Scouts)
	CHAPTER 31
286	<b>HOW TO BRAND A CORPORATION:</b> Q&A with Steff Geissbuhler, C&G Partners (CBS)
	CHAPTER 32
290	<b>HOW TO BRAND TELEVISION PROGRAMMING:</b> Q&A with Kenna Kay, MTV Networks (TV Land)
	CHAPTER 33
294	<b>HOW TO BRAND A BRANDING AGENCY:</b> Q&A with Michael Ian Kaye, Mother (Mother)

---

**SOURCES**

298	<b>REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES</b>
302	<b>DIRECTORY OF CONTRIBUTORS</b>
304	<b>ABOUT THE EDITOR</b>
305	<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>
306	<b>INDEX</b>

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BRANDS**

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So, what should the reader of the *Brand Bible* expect—fact or fiction?

The answer: This unique book gathers together many facts and fancies that inform the branding practice. It presents a narrative of the history of branding, of how branding emerged in its early forms and evolved into something much more pervasive. The goal is to provide a guide for professionals and an origin narrative for those engaged in aspects of contemporary branding, which include a broad range of projects: Branding books, restaurants, and media, as well as hotels, cities, and cultural institutions. Readers will receive a holistic understanding of brand procedures, brand languages, aesthetics, and ethics.

This book is a brand in its own right. It not only documents branding practices, it reinforces the “rightness” of branding. This “Bible” does not simply recount information; taken as a whole, it argues for the profession, its enormous influence, and its standards. It supports branding’s validity and viability—and its myths. This book is “the word.”

So, is branding religion, as the word *bible* implies? Not in the strict sense. But in branding, there is a deity—the product being branded—and a host of disciples—the secondary brands that both feed off and help nourish the main brand. And it certainly has devotees—those drawn to worship a particular deity.

Branding is not an organized religion, but branders must be devout. Read the interviews here with those involved with contemporary brands ranging from MTV to Lean Cuisine, and there is religiosity in their voices and fervency in their mission.

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## **In branding there is a deity—the product being branded—and a host of disciples.**

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They are committed to spreading the word (which they’ve helped to develop) and then to recruiting converts. The best brand campaigns not only sustain but also attempt to grow their congregations—I mean their consumer base.

*Brand and bible.* This book will help the reader understand what it takes to build, design, “activate,” and sustain brands. But if read carefully, it might actually cement the idea that during these hard times, when soaring debt is rampant and economic growth is stagnant, anything that motivates the economy is good, and that branding is indeed a calling—or at least a tool—in that mission.

—Steven Heller



**For at least 4,000 years, man has marked cattle with red-hot branding irons to prove his ownership. Literally millions of designs have been originated—some romantic, some dignified, some even comical—to distinguish herds. There is a true story behind every brand, frequently a tragedy, a comedy, a tender romance, more often a proclamation of hope.**

**— *Irons in the Fire: Cattle Brand Lore,*  
Oren Arnold**





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Hot iron branding  
device for cattle



# INTRODUCTION

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## **My entire life has been punctuated by brands.**

I became aware of their transformative power, albeit subconsciously, when I was little girl and first discovered packages of Goody barrettes hanging on the dazzling display racks in my father's pharmacy. I'd ogle these colorful accessories and imagine that the act of donning them would remake me into a prettier girl, though I had no real reason to believe this. Nevertheless, I was bewitched by the abundant array of hair accoutrements until my teens, at which point my yearning transferred to what I considered "cool" brands: Levi's jeans, Puma sneakers, and Lacoste polo shirts. From there, I turned to decidedly more adult brands, including the Ford Escort, Tiffany ring, and Cuisinart mixer. Nearly thirty years later, I look back on my all-consuming need for branded goods with both nostalgia and pity. I bestowed such power on these inanimate totems. I believed that by the sheer virtue of acquiring these objects, they would magically convert me into a dramatically different person—the person I longed to be.

Contrary to the way we think of brands now, the brand has not always signified the imprimatur of a manufactured product. The word *brand* is derived from the Old Norse word *brandr*, which means "to burn by fire." Ancient Egyptians marked their livestock with hot irons, and the process was widespread in Europe during the Middle Ages, not to mention in the American West centuries later. Such branding helped ranchers, both ancient and contemporary, to

separate cattle after they grazed in communal ranges; in addition, herders with high-quality livestock were able to distinguish themselves from those ranchers with inferior animals. The dynamics of brand reputation helped build better businesses even back then, and the role of the brand—as a barometer of value—has continued ever since.

In 1876, after the United Kingdom passed the Trade Marks Registration Act during the previous year, Bass Ale became the first trademarked brand in the world. Its quintessential red triangle, submitted to the government for trademark protection, became the icon for a new era of branding, one in which companies had legal protections for their brand identities. In addition to clinching "Trade Mark Number One," Bass's trailblazing history includes its appearances in Edouard Manet's 1882 masterpiece, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, and Pablo Picasso's 1912 painting, *Bouteille de Bass et guitare*, ostensibly providing the brand with the cultural distinction of "first product placement."

A century later, we are living in a world with over one hundred brands of bottled water. The United States is home to over forty-five thousand shopping malls, and there are over nineteen million permutations of beverage selections you can order at your local Starbucks. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? The observations Naomi Klein made over a decade ago in her seminal critique, *No Logo*, still resonate today.