

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

THREE NEUROSCIENCE TIPS TO ACCELERATE TOP-LINE SALES GROWTH

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

Authors: **Michael Platt**, *Director, the Wharton Neuroscience Initiative; James S. Riepe University Professor, Marketing Department, the Wharton School; Professor of Neuroscience, Perelman School of Medicine; Professor of Psychology, School of Arts and Sciences, the University of Pennsylvania* and **Leslie Zane**, *Founder & President, Triggers Growth Strategy*

THE GOAL:

Ditch the individual brand experience and tap your brand's growth potential by using new insights from neuroscience.

NANO TOOL:

No business needs to be stuck with the revenue level it is at today. But the key to accelerating sales and top-line growth doesn't lie in your marketing plan or your budget. It lies in the subconscious mind of your prospects, and you have much more power over that than you think.

New neuroscience research highlights two flawed current approaches to creating brand growth. The first starts with the idea that a brand stands for only one immovable concept, and marketers who follow this dictum focus on one positive attribute or experience. A more recent incarnation of this monolithic brand concept is that individuals should have their own unique brand experience. But that's wrong too.

In fact, every brand has a host of interconnected associations — an ecosystem of multi-dimensional, accumulated memories that dictate which brand you instinctively favor and buy most often. The more positive associations your brand has, the healthier it is and the greater its growth. That means a dogmatic pursuit of a single brand concept may be detrimental to success.

Instead, brands that dominate and are growing in their categories are bursting with a myriad of positive associations. New brain imaging research shows that brands that create these strong, positive emotional connections with their customers generate feelings of empathy and personal identity in the brain. This difference predicts stronger loyalty and less churn. Brain imaging studies show that convergence of positive thoughts among subjects is a strong predictor of business growth. Businesses that fail to build these connections face a higher likelihood of brand switching. Stronger personal identity with a brand also leads customers to share more information about the brand.

To capitalize on this information, businesses must create universal brand messages that will build positive associations in the minds of non-users. This is much more productive — and much more economical — than trying to create a different story for every customer. The action steps below can help build those positive associations, and grow your brand.



ACTION STEPS:

By implementing the three neuroscience principles below, you can help manage your brand's network of associations and accelerate top-line sales growth for any type of business:

- **Replace negative associations with positive ones.** To grow your brand in the mind of your target market, eliminate negative associations. Do this by building your message around positive associations, rather than trying to explain away the negative ones.
- **Develop marketing communications that create multiple rich associations, not single ideas.** Contrary to popular belief, the best communications have an overarching umbrella message comprised of multiple themes underneath. If your advertising boils down to just one thing, you might end up with a fairly barren brand network.
- **Segment your media, not your message.** Target segmentation is useful for learning how to reach prospects, but it should not be used to slice and dice your brand's messaging. Keep your communications consistent and universal. This will help bring in new users and build a brand community that shares emotional and cognitive connections with your company.

HOW LEADERS USE IT:

When Dollar Shave Club founder Michael Dubin launched his now famous YouTube video in 2012, the ensuing traffic crashed the brand's website. Within 48 hours, 12,000 orders were received. A few years later, Unilever bought the Club for \$1 billion. Most analyses of Dollar Shave Club's success mistakenly conclude that it accomplished this feat because of millennials' obsession with direct delivery, the founder's comedic flair, or its bargain basement prices. Instead, Dollar Shave Club rose to prominence because it expanded the brand's positive associations in customers' memories to the point that it became an automatic, involuntary choice. The biggest key to Dollar Shave Club's success was not that it communicated a single-minded idea, but rather that it rapidly stood for many, including good value, high quality, practicality, direct delivery, job creation, and an understanding of what you need (and what you don't).

International handmade cosmetics company Lush communicates a consistent message through its stores, products, packaging, and employees. Believing in "making effective products from fresh organic fruits and vegetables," and in "happy people making happy soap," many of their products are displayed in their stores without packaging. Once purchased, the natural soaps, powders, and shampoos are wrapped by the cashier. Packaged products are labeled with the face and name of the employee who packed it, and encourage consumers to recycle. That same organic message is communicated through its marketing strategy. A "no advertising spend" policy means it relies on its employees as brand ambassadors, and its customers as content creators. Facebook posts are not promoted, and there are no TV campaigns or celebrity endorsements.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- "[Cracking the Code on Brand Growth](#)," Michael Platt and Leslie Zane; Knowledge@Wharton, Jan. 7, 2019. Argues that the battle for business growth does not take place on the internet or on store shelves, but rather in the subconscious mind of prospective customers, whose purchasing decisions are more malleable than many brand leaders realize.
- Michael Platt directs Wharton Executive Education's [Leveraging Neuroscience for Business Impact](#).

ABOUT NANOTOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, director of Custom Programs at Wharton Executive Education. *Nano Tools for Leaders®* is a collaboration between joint sponsors Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. This collaboration is led by Professors Michael Useem and John Paul MacDuffie.