

A WHITEBOARD OVERVIEW BY MARTY NEUMEIER



The Brand Gap: How to Bridge the Distance Between Business Strategy and Design

By Marty Neumeier
Peachpit Press

This is an expanded edition of a book first published in 2003. In it, Neumeier develops in greater depth several basic ideas about how to bridge a gap between business strategy and design. There may be a conflict or misalignment rather than a “gap,” the business strategy is inappropriate, the design concepts are wrong-headed, or the execution fails. Neumeier notes, “A lot of people talk about it. Yet very few people understand it. Even fewer know how to manage it. Still, everyone wants it. What is it? Branding, of course—arguably the most powerful business tool since the spreadsheet.” What Neumeier offers is a “30,000-foot view of brand: what it is (and isn’t), why it works (and doesn’t), and most importantly, how to bridge the gap between logic and magic to build a sustainable competitive advantage.” Of course, that assumes that both logic and magic are present and combined...or at least within close proximity of each other.

The book’s design features create an appropriate visual context within which Neumeier examines each of five “Disciplines”: differentiation, collaboration, innovation, validation, and cultivation. Expect no head-snapping revelations. For many of those who read this book, its greatest value will be derived from reiteration of certain core concepts that Neumeier reviews with uncommon clarity and concision. Check out the “Take-Home Lessons” (pages 149-157). Here are three:

- “A brand is a person’s gut feeling about a product, service, or company. It’s not what you say it is. It’s what THEY say it is.”
- “Differentiation has evolved from a focus on ‘what it is,’ to ‘what it does,’ to ‘how you’ll feel,’ to ‘who you are.’ While features, benefits, and price are still important to people, experiences, and personal identity are even more important.”
- “How do you know when an idea is innovative? When it scares the hell out of you.”

Readers having relatively less experience with the branding process will especially appreciate the provision of an expanded (220-word) “Brand Glossary.” Neumeier also includes a “Recommended Reading” section in which he briefly comments on each source. 