MERLIN Building a Strong Brand in Today's Agricultural Revolution

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"We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten. Don't let yourself be lulled into inaction."—BILL GATES

This observation was made 20+ years ago, and still resonates today; especially given the growing importance of the science and technologydriven changes taking place in agriculture today.

Over the past ten years, innovation has accelerated exponentially. This is due to digitization, population increases, government policies, changes in consumer preference, an influx of venture capital and private equity, a growing number of agricultural entrepreneurs, and countless other factors.

Whether it's new forms of protein, technology, logistics, or innovative modes of growing, strong brands are key to fostering a level of understating with regulators, suppliers, and consumers. They provide the confidence needed for adoption of these and other advancements in this essential sector of the global economy.

The impact and implications of these sector transformations are not yet fully understood. However, we do know that the presence of a strong brand has increased in importance because of what they represent. Brands are bridges of understanding that link businesses with their key constituents and provide a common thread for different professional agricultural associations' advocacy efforts.



We need to only look to the strength and familiarity of leading food and nutritional brands to highlight this claim. Leading brands share the following characteristics: they engage with empathy, are purpose driven, and they keep things simple and memorable to maximize the consumer experience.

While the messaging and creative elements needed to support new agricultural innovations and the associations that support them are important, they can't be fully standardized. To fill this void, a set of tools and templates that make up a brands' infrastructure can and should be leveraged. Specifically, two types of infrastructure are needed to support the building of a strong agricultural brand and convey resonate messages. They are:

A technology infrastructure made up of the digital tools and capabilities to connect, sort, analyze, and access new forms of information and services in a simple, safe, and secure way. Think of this as an agricultural brands' hardware.

A communication infrastructure made up of branded templates and

on-demand consulting services to create the empathy needed to keep the human factor front-and-center, and the means to keep the producerconsumer relationship central to all communications. Think of this as an agricultural brands' software.

Having both in place will contribute to making capital-raising, regulatory, marketing, sales, advocacy, and communication processes more efficient, affordable, and effective.

They also provide the integrated communications operating system needed to help businesses and their advocates engage with those who matter most; ensuring all are met where they are in their food and nutrition informational journey.

In closing, we leave you with the following quote that sums up our perspective on the importance of brands and marketing:

> "Marketing today is not a function; it is a way of doing business. Marketing is not a new ad campaign or this month's promotion. Marketing must be all-pervasive, part of everyone's job description, from the receptionists to the board of directors."

-REGIS MCKENNA, Marketing Is Everything



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We create simple brand strategies, designs and communications that move markets, organizations and the world — forward by collaborating with our clients to change experiences in ways that positively impact the behaviors of customers, employees, investors and policymakers. We make this happen by transforming complexity into simplicity and ensuring what is simple becomes memorable.

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