

A manifesto by Julius Geis



*Total*Branding

Build **real** brands. Come out **stronger**. And be ready for the next **big thing**.

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More information about Identity Built Branding™ visit:

www.juliusgeis.com

www.aina.studio

www.mua.design

The Premise.

Take it from a black sheep: the usual way is rarely the best way.

My name is Julius Geis. I've always seen things from the outside. But the beauty of standing apart from the herd is that you see things from a different perspective. Once I began to understand the power of varying viewpoints, I started to put it to use.

You've heard my story before. A rising talent in the advertising world has it all: acclaim, clients, money. But something's missing.

At 27, I knew I needed a change. I left advertising and traveled widely. I crossed paths with various teachers that introduced me to concepts of self-awareness, quantum realities, and ancient spiritual practices, and I began to investigate new concepts of purpose. I realized I felt happier — and my curiosity kicked in. I thought, maybe what brings a sense of purpose to me as an individual could also spark something within collective identities: brands and organizations. Years of theoretical and practical experimenting began.

Branding, for better or worse, has dominated the past century. Brands influence the way we work, how we live, consume, and identify ourselves as individuals and society. I began to reject branding as it was often practiced: as a formulaic process intended to convince companies of a problem in order to sell them a solution. I realized that a brand was not a static, unyielding mask but rather an evolving, interconnected being.

I created Identity Built Branding™, IBB, to offer a better alternative. Identity Built Branding has changed how I understand my industry and opened new avenues of doing business, and I think it's my time to share it. IBB believes:

- A brand is a responsive organism that exists within the context of its surroundings.
- A brand is the distilled essence of many identities represented by an organization expressing its personality.
- A brand's purpose is to strengthen and connect.

Branding in its current form is dead. It's time to move away from brand-fakes that claim ownership and manipulate people to achieve their objective. Let's embrace branding designed to strengthen our collective connections between people, brands, and the environment.

The Reviews.

Don't just take it from me. IBB has impacted companies across the world.

“As a CEO and entrepreneur, advice is one of the easiest things to come by and has led into a whirlpool of opposing viewpoints, often for the worse, guiding the company in many directions at once and leading to little progress. This is why IBB is genius. IBB allows a business operator to cut through the pile of customer, employee, and investors' opinions and focus on what is truly unique to themselves and their organization. This gives one the ability to have a clear north star, make decisions quickly and accurately, and truly create a brand and company that leaves a unique mark and impact on the world.”

- *Matt Boney, Founder of Daycation*

“The concept of IBB doesn't just help brands to transition into a new reality of relationships between brands and people. It provides a much needed pathway towards achieving internal authenticity and minimizes pressure points that may contribute to burnout of workers. Definitely recommend the read!”

- *Nina Zupančič – Business Psychologist*

IBB is Urgent.

The world is changing. It is a fact. People have stopped accepting the status quo. Climate change, social injustice movements, and the increasing polarity of belief systems are all evidence of this. We're all a part of movements, whether we realize it or not.

The way we relate to brands is radically different now. Companies and collectives have new roles in our lives; we have formed relationships with them that need to be reciprocal.

We're at a tipping point. We're all designers, building a world together. We're the CEOs of our own reality.

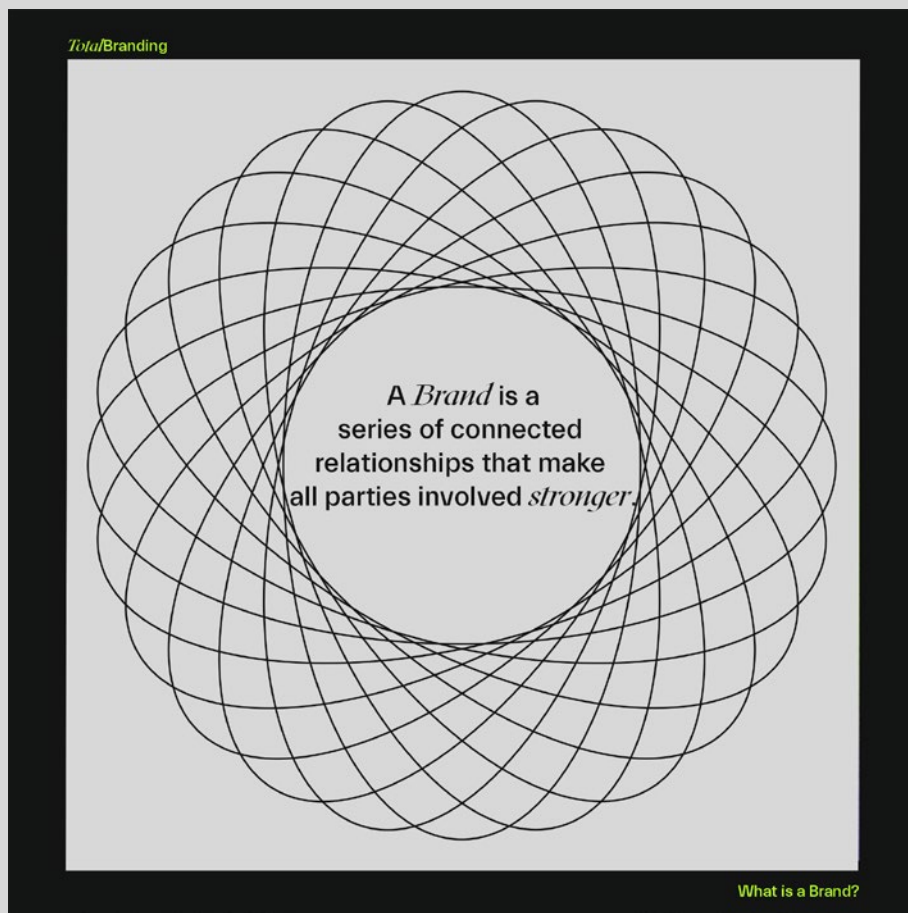
And brands need to shed their rigid conceptions of how things are done in order to find new ways to understand themselves and how they connect to the world around them.



A Brand By Any Other Name.

The process of Identity Built Branding™ involves shifting perspectives and rethinking brand identity. IBB begins by investigating three key questions and offering some simple but radical answers:

- 1) What is a brand? (its identity)
- 2) What does a brand do? (its purpose and mission = product/services)
- 3) Who builds a brand? (its environment in the context of its identity)



How Do We Define Branding?

There is no universally accepted definition of a brand. If you're a doctor and you say: "appendectomy", everyone in the operating room knows what you're talking about. But if you're in a boardroom with 25 executives and you say "branding", chances are each one will have their own definition.

Even industry officials don't agree on exactly what branding is. Some examples are:

- *AMA, The American Marketing Association*

"A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate them from other competitors." (1)

- *Jean-Noël Kapferer*

"A set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service." (2)

- *Marty Neumeier*

"A result in peoples head." (3)

(1) American Marketing Association (1960), Marketing Definitions: A Glossary of Marketing Terms, Chicago, American Marketing Association

(2) Jean-Noël Kapferer, Book: The New Strategic Brand Management, Year 2008

(3) Marty Neumeier and The Future talk, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO4te2QNsHY>

IBB, at its core, believes that most of the current branding definitions are too short-sided. They're not wrong, but they're incomplete. The word "brand" became a catch-all, holding too many expectations that couldn't be satisfied under one word. The central issue is that branding today is mechanically executed, rather than naturally embodied.

However, with Identity Built Branding™, a brand is defined as follows:

A series of connected relationships that make all parties involved stronger.

Alternatively: A sense of self, an awareness of others and context, all in a continuous ever-present relationship of identity.

What does a brand do?

In the concept of IBB, a brand wants to strengthen relationships. Including all relationships in a traditional sense, e.g., between customers, employees, stakeholders, etc. But IBB also investigates a broader notion of what constitutes a relationship and extends that notion to product innovation, the environment, the market, platforms, and past experiences.

The reason why we go through a brand-building process is for a brand to become self-aware. Self-awareness leads to a living culture that is aligned with the organization's purpose, values, and its direction. This is the essence of identity.

Who builds a brand?

IBB includes all people and stakeholders in the process of brand-building. No culture or relationship can be built without the participation of all people involved. To make IBB successful, owners and stakeholders must commit to participating in the process entirely. In other brand methodologies, a brand is something that happens to an organization and is seen by many C-Levels as something that is done by others. Not with IBB. Owners, C-Levels, management, and all individuals holding the business together are required to become part of their brand-organism.

Now, let's get the ball rolling.

In order to begin the process of IBB, all facets of an organization need to agree on some core tenets from the questions we just posed. In my experience, there needs to be a shared desire or openness to change, one that extends to the very top. In some instances, while a company expresses a need for change, executives at the top are fundamentally unwilling to truly transform. They hold on to the belief that branding is something external and relegated to others. When the time came for them to participate and re-think their connection to their brand and the world, they opted out and the approach was incomplete.

But ready or not, change is going to come. And above anything, IBB is an embodied process, one that impacts all the tangled relationships of an organization. And the devil is in the details, so let's get down to the specifics.



The Methodology.

The process of Identity Built Branding™ is simple. It starts with figuring out why a company truly is in business.

IBB refers to this as “the founding spirit”. The founding spirit orchestrates the company’s purpose, values, and personal identities into one sweet sounding symphony. Knowing your founding spirit leads to a sense of self-awareness – an intuitive practice that becomes your steering wheel for strategic, social, cultural, and operating decision making.

Understanding self-awareness is crucial for IBB. Within this context, self-awareness is the interchange of knowing who you are and the practice of routinely checking in with yourself, asking if your current place or your action is in alignment with your identity’s purpose.

The core of it all.

Identity Built Branding is focused on the connection between an organization’s purpose and how it communicates that purpose through its relationships. The process is grounded in establishing a fully self-aware core identity, forged from the brand’s most authentic purpose and culture. A brand isn’t established from the outside-in, but rather radiates from the inside-out. Once you consistently bring a brand back to its internal source, the notions of who am I? and what am I doing?, and all brand relationships are strengthened through that alignment.

IBB’s goal is to shape a union between individuals’ concepts of identities and the collective ones represented inside an organization. IBB can be applied to any organization, regardless of function. As long as all participants are honest and continue to play an active role, the results will be fruitful.

We start by zeroing in on the organization’s self. But how to sift through the silt and find the gold? The IBB self-searching process starts with these questions:

- How do we close the gap between the purpose of business and the world itself?
- What do we wish for the world to become?
- What is the core reason we are in business?
- What are our non-negotiable, guiding beliefs?
- Where do we come from, what are our backgrounds of people and experience?

The understanding of self, or the founding spirit, is what IBB is all about and is the focal point for future strategic development and decision making. In other words, IBB asks for guidance and leadership that is anchored from within, instead of controlled from the outside.

This is a major shift in how companies will answer to rising challenges in the future. Instead of reacting to outside factors, IBB strengthens the culture and leadership from inside-out, and attracts relationships with likeminded people automatically.

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What is IBB?

Identity Built Branding is the natural progression and evolution of branding.

IBB's goal is to shape a union between individuals' concepts of identities and the collective ones represented inside an organization.



2021



Identity Built Branding

When using IBB with clients, the beginning of the process involves a workshop that allows the client to gain insights into these answers to identify their founding spirit.

How It All Goes Down.

Let's embark on a hypothetical journey to demonstrate IBB in action. Don't panic, I'll keep it brief.

An organization, X Inc., has been facing a challenging time. Revenue has been decreasing for months and leadership is confronted with serious cashflow issues. Typically, X Inc. would start cutting costs. They'd reduce staff, renegotiate with suppliers, take away year-end bonuses. They focus on symptoms, rather than investigate the underlying causes of their issues. These could be:

1. The product is just not relevant or good enough.
2. The brand is not desirable anymore.
3. The team's productivity and cultural identity is low.
4. Inconsistent leadership

Within an Identity Built Branding™ system, we begin with re-establishing the founding spirit. We go to the core of X Inc. and question their sense of self with fresh eyes:

1. Is what we do still serving our purpose of why we are in business?
2. Are our products reflecting our identity 100% or are we over compromising?
3. Are we living our identity day in day out, and are we making sure that everybody in the team is a part of the IBB brand-organism?

From there, we look for discrepancies between the founding spirit and the company's reality. We probe their relationships, from internal employee-manager connections to the relationships between the brand and the world: their suppliers, consumers, and communities.

The problems lie in where these relationships are disrupted. That's what points us to the underlying cause and where we can look to strengthen and save X Inc. in a profound, sustainable manner, rather than putting a Band-Aid® on a festering wound.

IBB and Adaptability.

Change, the only constant.

Companies using the Identity Built Branding™ methodology will undergo changes faster and more efficiently than companies without it.

Why? IBB by design focuses on resources available versus what is not available. The process plays to a company's strength by finding their true sense of self rather than manufacturing a false identity that will inevitably crumble under the pressure of reality. When you're operating from a place of truth, your relationships are grounded in trust and a like-mindedness that allows them to move and react to the flow of business and culture. Rigid relationships built on false premises or forced connections will always struggle to evolve.

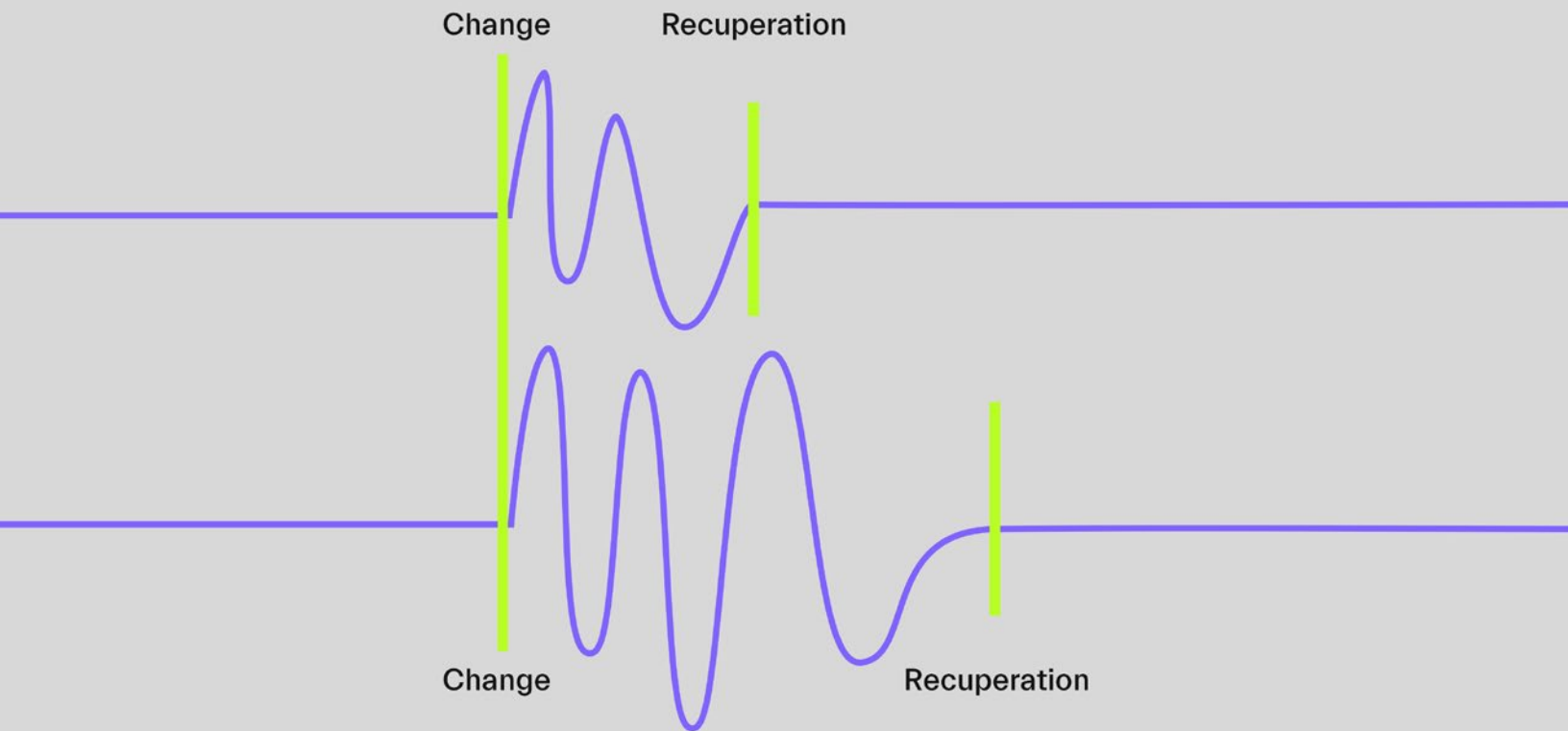
When companies undergo change and fail, it's most likely because they were going through the motions but weren't willing to truly change in the first place. More often than not, a company's failure to implement change goes back to the fundamental truth that they didn't really want to do it. (1)

IBB helps equip companies with the right tools to gain self-awareness to make changes organically and internally, rather than constantly needed outside intervention to grow and evolve.

(1) - Why change management fails

J.P. Kotter's reasons <https://hbr.org/2007/01/leading-change-why-transformation-efforts-fail>
Ali Mohammad Mosadeghrad reasons https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275590169_Why_do_organisational_change_programmes_fail

With IBB



Without IBB

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Change is hard.

On an individual level as well as the collective, change forces us to re-evaluate ourselves and our actions in difficult ways. New is not always easy.

Brands have lost public trust. They've lost their power. They've lost their way. To a large degree, it's due to brand reactions to the changing role of the consumer. With the rise of social media and higher degrees of brand-consumer interactions, brands have begun to cater to the consumer and their collective power – changing their product, message, and methodology to appeal to what they think consumers want. Managers do everything to please customers, hit their goals, and sell more. Their brand starts manipulating its communication, and consequentially, compromises its authenticity and sense of self.

But when a brand is anchored in an organic identity and moving from a place of purpose, they can navigate this difficult field. Consumers are drawn to collectives that authentically express their identity and can relate to them via lasting relationships that strengthen both parties. In this emerging collective economy, a common goal, like products with a better ecological footprint, carbon-free transportation, equal and diverse societies, have major appeal. And when these are expressed authentically through a company's identity and the products or services offered, increased trust and spending power will redefine these relationships completely.

I believe that as we move towards a better understanding of our new collective, interconnected culture and economy, branding in its traditional structure and motive will soon disappear, and relationship-centric branding methodologies such as IBB will become more common practice. Something great is rising!

#TotalBranding | share your thoughts!

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About.

Snapshot: Julius was born April 2, 1983, (Stuttgart, Germany); Lives in, Maui, Hawaii. Founder, Designer, Brand Strategist, Creator of Identity Built Branding™.

Founder: of 'Āina, Mua, On Any Given Monday, RUA 37 CoWorking Maui, TuesdaySubmarine, AreYouElectric.Com, Hana Hou, Support Your Local Artist, Mr. Brown Retail Store

Interim Manager Brand/CBO: Globetrotter, Elkline, finkid/finside, Bataleon Snowboards, Gotcha Surf, Tony Hawk Kids and Terra Canis.

Creative brand strategies for Afri, Aloha in Action, Aral BP, Austrian Airlines, Beck's, Bing, Bogner, Brax, Burt's Bees, Cab - Cola and Beer, Carlsberg Beer, Cisco, Datev, Elkline, Equity One Real Estate, Finkid, Finside, Frilufts, Gore-Tex, Globetrotter, HD-Premier, Hyundai, KIA, Kosmos Verlag, NetApp, Netgear, Nuance, Nitro Snowboards, O2 Telefonica, PueoKea Farms, R+V 24, Siemens Health, Strellson, Sony Music, Sunny Cars, Tony Hawk, Microsoft, WGV Himmelblau, Windows.

Biography: Julius Geis is an inspirational branding expert and creative innovator with more than 16 years of professional experience. He is fascinated by the impact beliefs, thoughts and actions have on people's lives and decisions. Julius's WHY is rooted in his passion for the relationship between humans and brands, his drive to challenge the impossible and his foresight to navigate people and businesses to their fulfillment.

Julius was born in Germany, where he trained as a banker and started his first retail, distribution and e-commerce business at the age of 21 -- showcasing his natural creativity. Challenging ideas that were regarded as "impossible" in the industry has motivated Julius to start up multiple companies and innovations over the last 16 years. A journey that taught him the art of failure and success equally.

In 2008, Julius started his "spiritual journey." Feeling empty at that time, he found rescue in the islands of Hawai'i. Immediately taken away by the islands' beauty, Julius had to rest and think about his bigger reasons of existence. This experience of personal transformation builds the foundation for his "identity-built branding", a strategy he is practicing today with his clients. The methodology believes truthfulness and authenticity are the keys to long-lasting success and happiness for all people and businesses.

In his career, Julius never shied away from working with global players or boutique brands. He engaged and interacted with an international audience on various stages from Asia to Europe, and as a columnist, he delivered inspiring words to a whole industry.

Thank You!

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