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Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



Building Your Brand Guest was Carolina Rogoll

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Note: This is a transcription of an interview. It has not gone through a professional editing process and may contain grammatical errors or incorrect formatting.

Transcription of Interview

Joe: *Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 Podcast. With me today is a branding, building professional, and faculty member of the Master's in Branding at the School of Visual Arts. Carolina Rogoll has brought her professional and educational expertise together to create a five-step framework for creating and managing a brand. It's a tool she's created and has been teaching to her students at SVA, presented in her book *Star Brands: A brand manager's guide to build, manage, and market brands*. Thanks for joining me Carolina and how did you end up teaching at the New York City School of Visual Arts?*

Carolina: Thanks Joe for having me. I started teaching at the School of Visual Arts five years ago. And actually, I was managing a brand in New York City at that time, and I needed some fresh thinking. And at that point, I really thought that the best way to get new ideas was reaching out to students. Things just happened and I met who's a famous designer and who was building the first Master's in Branding, and we decided to get together and work on the thesis for the first year of the branding program and focusing on the brand that I was

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managing at that time. And sure enough, the thesis was a success, and I fell in love with the program, the students, and then got invited to join the faculty. That was five years ago, and I guess the rest is history. The class became really popular, and it's now a book and that continues.

Joe: *I want to ask you, why did you concentrate on brands, you know the broader subject of marketing?*

Carolina: I started marketing in several degrees and have been a brand-building professional for several years now. Marketing is just a component in how you build brands, so I think brand-building is more encompassing. Marketing is just one component of it. When you think about how you manage a brand and how you grow a brand are also aspects of that. So to me, brand-building is a broader term if you will or the broader discipline, which marketing is just a part of that as well. So it definitely belongs in there; I just like to believe that everything is at the service of building brands but are also businesses.

Joe: *Well you just spoke at the HOW Design Conference in Atlanta, can you tell me about your presentation or was it a workshop or what was it?*

Carolina: Sure. It was a presentation focused primarily on the concept of Star Brands, which my book is based and the Star Brand Model. But the premise of the presentation and

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I don't know if you know this stat is that every month, there are over 500,000 new businesses started every month in the US. And we know from statistics that half of these businesses will fail, but half will succeed. So the intent of the presentation was to equip people in the audience with the tools that they need to increase the chances of success of the branding endeavors who are starting their own brands. And then I spent some time walking them through the core principles of Star Brands which is what brands do best, as well as the Star Brand Model and how they can use that to begin a brand-building process for any brand at any stage.

Joe: *Star Brands is your new book, can you tell me who it was intended for?*

Carolina: The book has two audiences; one is the students. As I mentioned earlier, the book was really inspired by the class I've been teaching at the Master's in Branding. Students at a master level would be one of the core groups. But the second one is really anyone looking for structured guidance on how to build and market a brand. Now interestingly enough, as I have been sharing the book and meeting with people, there are two natural groups that have really been benefiting from the book. One is startups, and then the other group is designers. These are natural groups, and they gravitate to the concepts because these are people or targets that really, really benefit from the concept, and they can apply them right away.

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So in the case of startups, for example, you cannot afford a marketer right from the beginning, but you need to begin to treat your business as a brand to increase your chances of success. So the book is a great guide for anyone at any stage of the development of their brand or their business. So that has really, really become a target group if you will that is really enjoying the book. And because of that, I was recently invited to become a columnist at Entrepreneur.com and that is what you see as one of the natural groups that are starting to gravitate to really using the book to grow their business.

Joe: *I have to be honest with you; when I first got the book and started going through it and looking at the chapter titles and everything, it didn't excite me a lot. It was kind of like, oh here's another educator turning their textbook type material into a book. But the book was laid out so well that as I glanced through it, I started grabbing a paragraph here, I started noticing something a little bit over here and after my first walk-through, I said gee, I got some stuff out of this. I need to read it! I thought it was unique the way you laid it out a little bit as far as some of the pops and the color with the actual brands and then the very basic subtle instruction-type drawings in it that gave it the content of it. Can you explain how you participated in the layout of it?*

Carolina: Sure. Well first of all, thank you for the compliment and I'm glad that the aesthetics caught your attention because that was intentional, and it's also what makes this book really special because the aesthetic design was something that I was really striving for

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as I recognize that when you think about students or designers that're the key target for the group as we discussed previously, you need the book to be visually appealing for the concepts to come to life and getting used. We all know that we learn when we have appealing materials in front of us. I was really trying to stay away from this being another taxed or let's say MBA heavy book that ultimately is not practical or you might not just even read, or you would abandon really quickly. Also, the aesthetic design was important but you have to also recognize that if you have a book about Start Brands in being a marketing book, it should be very well-designed and visually appealing. So you have to basically walk the talk. If you're really talking about how you set yourself apart and how you build brands and that's the content of the book, the book should also speak that way.

Joe: *I think you did a nice job and you know I beat up on the chapter outlines there a little bit but it's very, very basic, that five-step outline that you put in there. Can you give me those five steps or just the quick outline of it?*

Carolina: Sure. So the Star Brand model is basically a five-step process or outline as you mentioned. I also refer to it as a framework which is a set of steps that if you follow them, you will have your desired outcome which is hopefully the plan on how you can build, manage and market your brand.

The first step is called brand assessment and vision setting and in that step one, you are

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looking to do and really define where you stand in the marketplace and how you define your competitor set because if you don't do that, you won't be able to really trace your trajectory. Step two is about defining your brand equity and your target, and what we mean by that is that it's very important to have clarity in terms of what you stand for and who you're after. So that's a critical in any brand-building process is taking the time to clarify what you stand for and who you're after.

Then once you know that, you could move to step three which is all about the communication strategy which is really about what you will tell others. So how are you going to communicate your benefits, how is it that you're going to entice people to be part of your brand and build a relationship with them. And then step four is where you take all these previous steps and then start thinking through, this is where you start to put some of the marketing strategy into action and understand what are the variables and you might be familiar with the 4 P's across positioning, the pricing, promotion, and the product itself in order to maximize your sale.

And the finishing step number five is how you build a marketing plan that allows you to put all these steps into action with a physical, tangible document if you will that becomes the guide in how you want to build your brand in the marketplace. You should be able to measure how well the plan works and define your success and continue to use the model on-going. So that's the intent. The five steps as you can tell is the step of discovery, creativity, strategy,

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and action, and that's the intent of following a structured process to build a brand.

Joe: *Is it meant to be read cover to cover or can I just pick them up and pick the two that I'm weak at and use it there?*

Carolina: You can pick it up at any point of the brand-building journey. Let's say if you are a startup and you're just starting to define what your business is and your brand is, you should start right from the beginning to the end, right? Because you are in that evolution stage where you are just defining who you are, who you're going after. If you're an existing brand for example and you have a specific problem which is you don't know which consumers to go after or you want to hone in further, you can start perhaps on step two of the process.

Now, the book is meant to be used as a workbook so at any given time, you can go into the steps and then you have questions after each chapter that allow you almost be true to yourself on where you're really are. It gives you the ability to start from any point in time. Each of the chapters are very much descriptive of the specific strategy component that you need to get right for your brand to continue to grow in the journey.

Jo: *At the end of this, I can have really built an effective marketing strategy, is that true?*

Carolina: Yes, that's the intent. The model is really my take on the idea of brand-building

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process, and you can follow it in order or hone in on the specific steps. What is important is that you always go back on do you have a plan that clearly outlines how you're going to create value in the marketplace for your brand, including relationship with the consumers, how you're going to communicate with them, and what success looks like. And if you don't put that in writing and you're not disciplined about following that; it's going to be really hard for your brand to have the ground running.

I should clarify that when I talk about brand, is business as well because any product or service out there has the potential to become a brand because you want the product and service to be distinctive and find its own unique space on how you're going to delight consumers in a specific way. So when I speak about brand, that equals business. It's just that how the business comes to life for a consumer transaction, you need to have a brand and a promise of what you can do for the consumer.

Joe: *When I have a Startup and Innovation which are really hot words right now, do I need to be using and putting this down in writing when I'm starting up and trying to find product market fit, going that route? I mean do I really need this type of information and write it all down or is it a waste of time?*

Carolina: Yes, you should be writing because that increases your chances of getting the clarity that you need to go and try a few things. You will not get it right at the beginning and

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when you write these on paper, none of that is set in stone but the benefit of following a disciplined process is that you can clearly communicate what you're after and learn very quickly on whether that's the right way to go. Also, even in a startup on mindset, you either have a team of people you're working with that you need to be convincing on what the vision is and how to get there, or you have investors or you want people to believe in your idea and you need their funding.

For example, having your strategy and how you plan to build your brand and your business on paper will increase the chances of someone being willing to invest in your plan because they know that you have a clear strategy, that you know where the consumers will come from, where the sales will come from, and how you are going to invest dollars specifically across marketing vehicles on distribution methods for the sale to really come through. I really believe you need the discipline in the thinking to increase your chances of success of having a sustainable business and a brand behind it.

Joe: *Now you're making sense and talking the right tune. You can get me money, right? I can make money off of this, okay. You say some really key things there that aren't to be taken lightly because if you can't synthesize if you can't put it down on paper, it's really difficult to go forward. I mean you save yourself a lot of money yourself even without investors. You save yourself a lot of money by the struggle of putting it down on paper.*

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Carolina: Absolutely. They say that strategy is sacrificed, and you will be surprised when I do this work with entrepreneurs, or even one of the concepts in the book is defining what you want to stand for. Even that simple question in defining what you will offer, the reason why your brand or your business exists and what will you set apart, you have this whole range from people that give you a long laundry list, a feature, and consumers don't buy features; they buy benefits, all the way to not necessarily being able to define a relevant way of connecting with consumers.

Just putting things on paper will help you pressure test if you will on whether your proposition is the right one. And then with that, you can compare it versus the next available competitor or again it's really the vision or where you want to take your brand. I really believe that having goals without a plan is really just a wish; so putting it on paper is what really enables you for it to manifest and get feedback and get it going and pressure test your thinking.

Joe: *I read the book, create a marketing plan from it, I do those things -- what's my next step after the book? I start using it, am I going to keep using the book or is there another step that I need to start concentrating on after building the brand and starting to implement the marketing strategy? Where do I go after the book?*

Carolina: Very good question. Brand building is a journey. It's not like a one-time thing that you do and complete, and you forget about it, because your consumers change, your

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business changes. All the businesses and brands are in an evolution stage. But what's interesting is that in that evolution stage, you can either move from startup to a very successful business or from startup to failure or from startup to successful business to one that needs realignment, and that almost happens as the business grows.

Traditional brands do the process of brand-building and even these five steps every year. They start them all over again. Because only until you see whether the strategies that you have followed, to get you the consumers that you want or your communication is working or you have selected the right mix of everything, you will know whether that strategy will work. Now it doesn't mean that you have to wait a year; I mean you're losing sales from day one, right? You need to adjust more quickly than that. But the star actually of the five steps is supposed to continue. You should always be asking yourself, is what I stand for relevant to those consumers, and am I going after the right consumers, and am I talking to them in the right way, and is this translating into sales? And these five things that I tried in terms of trying to get my sales up would they continue to be the right things to invest in to continue to grow my sale? And then you go back into how has the marketplace changed. So I would say, at least every year, you should be revisiting your strategy on how you're building your brand and of course you should be tracking depending on your business monthly your business goals, and both are related to the strategy that you have chosen to market your brand.

Joe: *Okay, so you're really saying we're going to find another S-curve. I mean we're going*

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to go through those different curves as we grow as a company and not necessarily that big R of rebranding, but maybe a little R of rebranding all the time.

Carolina: You got it. There's actually a phrase that you'll see me talk about in the book called 'realignment' and 'turnaround.' There are situations where your strategy might be right, but you lost your way because certain market conditions changed. So you're not completely off-track but you need to realign and adjust a few things. That typically happens for example when there is a change of management, or there's just a change in market conditions. And then you have the other situation which is you have been on such a sharp decline that you really need to turnaround the brand and when you're in that situation, you almost need to assume that you can revisit every component of the brand. Everything is up for grasp in a turnaround situation.

So yes, part of using this model and part of building a brand or any business is having the ability to understand where you are at each point of the time, so that you can identify what is the right growth strategy and the level of investment that you need to move the business from one stage to the next one. And ultimately for brands, it's about surviving, and it's all about how the brand adapts to change. So it's almost the concept of evolution of Darwin applied to brands. It's not the survival of the fittest; it's more the smartest is those that adapt best to change. So that's how we should be looking at how you build a business and that's why you should have a review of your overall strategy and revisiting the model often.

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Joe: *What's upcoming for Carolina and turn me about the best way to learn more about the book and even how to contact you.*

Carolina: Absolutely. Well, first of all, I'm just enjoying sharing the book and talking with people like you Joe in terms of how they can use the book to increase the success of their branding endeavors. I definitely plan on continuing my teaching, my writing, and, of course, my professional aspirations as a brand-builder. I keep up a lot of my articles and news in my Website, which is buildstarbrands.com. You can see there all my articles across different publication. You could actually also get a free download of the introductory chapter of the book. It's available on the Website. The Website is buildstarbrands.com, and that's a great way to contact me. I'm also active on Twitter; my Twitter handle is @crogoll and I tweet regularly. That's another good way to connect if you're interested in the world of building brands and need any help.

Joe: *That sounds excellent. I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity. I enjoyed the book, and I look forward to using it over and over with clients. I've already used it once and referenced it. Is the book out now?*

Carolina: Yes. It's out now, so it's available for everyone. It is in hard copy, eBooks, so they're available for any learning style whether you want it as a workbook, or you just want

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to glance through it and refer to it quite often in your brand building journey.

Joe: *Well I would recommend it very much., again the book Star Brands. This podcast will be available on the Busienss901 iTunes store and the Business901 Podcast. Thanks again Carolina.*

Carolina: Thanks so much Joe. I enjoyed it.

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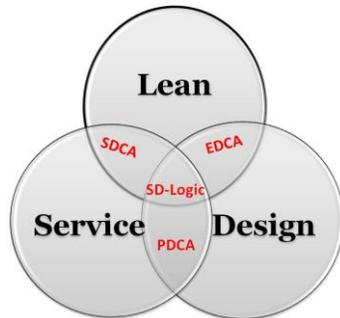
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Joseph T. Dager

Business901

Phone: 260-918-0438

Skype: Biz901

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: jtdager@business901.com

Website: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)

Joe Dager is President of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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