UNBLAND YOUR BRAND

A no-BS quick guide for marketing mavericks in boring categories.



Irwin Collective



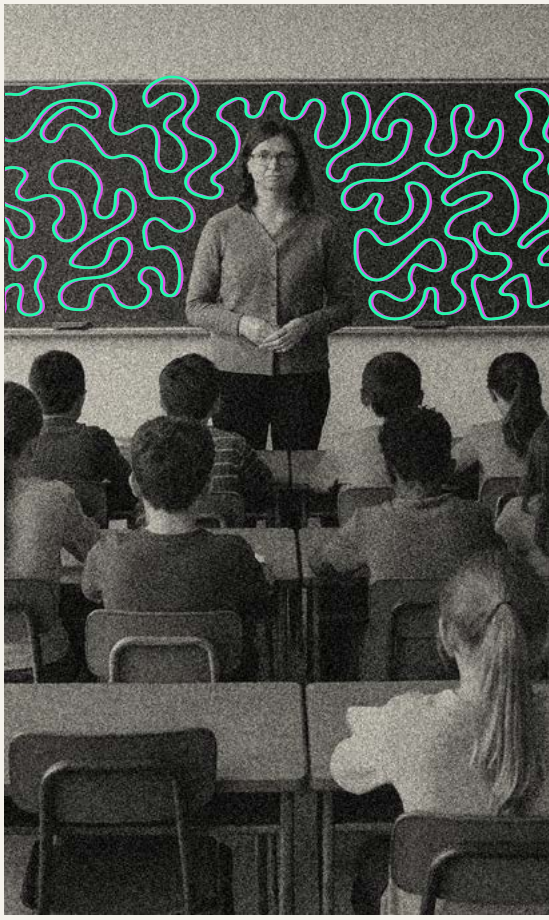
Is it you? Your boss?

Or that one decision-making process where experienced creatives got steamrolled by... well, you know. (IYKYK.)

However you got here, you can feel it:
Your brand is bland, and it's going nowhere fast.

Let's break down why.

Why Unblanding Matters



In school, we're told to raise our hand, color inside the lines, and basically not stand out. We're trained to follow norms, not question them. Nowhere is that clearer than in the dreaded biology group project. Everyone's just trying to get along, play it safe, and land the grade.

So when those same kids grow up and start building brands, they do the same thing. They mimic the competition, match the category, and end up invisible.

But not you.

You were the kid asking "Why do I have to show my work if I got the answer right?" Or "Why do socks have to match if they make me feel good?" You kept that creative streak. That maverick mindset.

The problem?

You grew up and now you're in brand-building group projects again. Only this time, Johnny's the CFO and Jill's the CEO. And once again, bold ideas are voted down for safe ones. The democratic choice gets the "A"... but you can't unsee the missed potential.

Nothing's changed since tenth grade biology. Except now, the stakes are higher.

As marketers, it's on us, the mavericks, to challenge bland decisions before they reach the market. That's a whole topic in itself (we'll get there), but first: you need the basics.

So here's your cheat sheet.

Take this into your next group project—er, meeting—and remember:
The safe choice is the invisible one. And invisibility is a major risk.
If you want your brand to stand out in a sea of sameness, you've got to help your team see what you see and have the guts to choose differently.

Let's start by defining what a bland brand is... and how it happens.

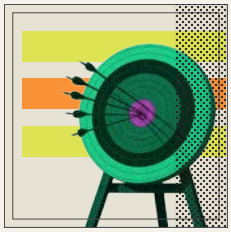


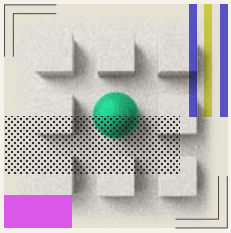
Bland brands are the result of fear. Committees. Comfort zones. It's easier to mimic than to lead. But mimicry is just more noise.

If you've ever said, "We're kind of like X but cheaper," or "We're the full-solution for category Y"... go ahead and nod with me. You know it, you're blending in.

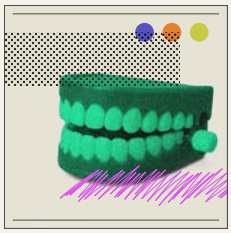
Let's do it. Let's break that cycle.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UNBLANDED BRAND







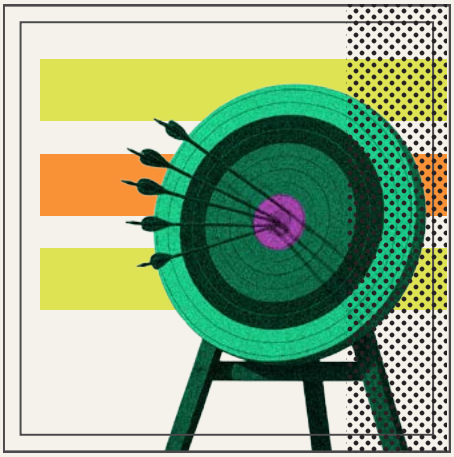






THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UNBLANDED BRAND

1. PURPOSE



It all starts with “why.”

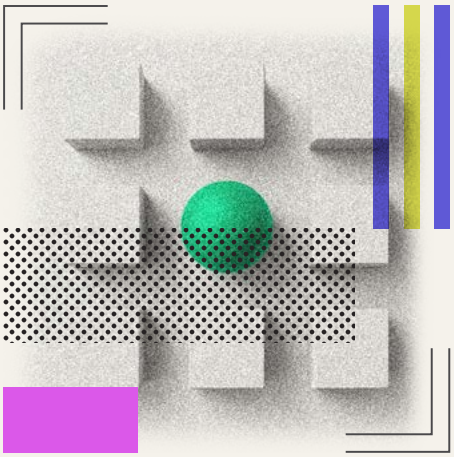
Not revenue. Not growth. Why do you really exist? What’s the emotional driver?

- Mission. Vision. Values. Don’t just write them, live them, celebrate them, talk about them daily.
- Know your true self and express it. Brand archetypes help. Like the characters in movies, people recognize human traits in brands.
- Have a spine. Stand for something. Don’t bend to market winds.

Inside-out branding wins every time. EVP > UVP Everyday. Build from Employment Brand outward to Consumer Brand.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UNBLANDED BRAND

2. POSITIONING



Do you know who you're for and the value you provide them? More importantly, do you know who you're not for?

- Define your category
- Define your buyer.
- Define your enemy.
- Define your edge

Most brands guess. The best ones ask.

Marty Neumeier says brand is not what you say it is, it's what they say it is... so ask good questions. (Discovery is an essential part of strategy, but it doesn't have to feel like you're at Six Flags Over Texas waiting in the forever line in the middle of August.) There are effective ways to get you out of the heat, keeping you on time and on budget.

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3. MESSAGING



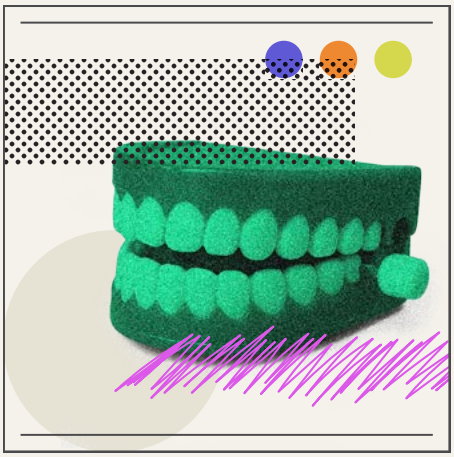
Stop writing slogans. Start telling the truth in a way only you can.

- Clarity beats clever. Every time.
- Emotion moves. Logic justifies.
- Don't just sell features. Sell beliefs. Sell better, brighter futures.

And please, stop saying you're "innovative". Your new AI tool is not a differentiator, it's already the base-line.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UNBLANDED BRAND

4. BRAND VOICE



Your voice is your personality in text form. Have a strategy behind it and stick to it.

- **Voice** = consistent personality
- **Tone** = flexible depending on context

If your About page sounds like it was written by ChatGPT before coffee, rewrite it.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UNBLANDED BRAND

5. VISUAL IDENTITY



Design isn't decoration. It's communication.

- Your logo is not your brand, but it's big-part of the story.
- Color should differentiate, not just "feel trustworthy."
- Motifs should connect to message, not just fill space.
- Juxtaposition is your friend. Use contrast. Use friction.

Think different. Look different. Sound different. Feel different. Smell different. Be different. For goodness sake, do different.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UNBLANDED BRAND

6. EXECUTION



Bold isn't optional. It's the strategy.

- Start with a BIG idea. Lead with message, express it visually, and make it impossible to ignore.
- Audit frequently. Look inward and outward.
- Stick to your purpose, positioning, and brand archetype. Be consistent.

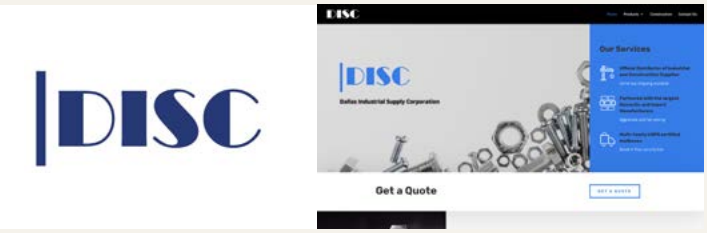
Don't be different for weirdness' sake... Be different because sameness kills.

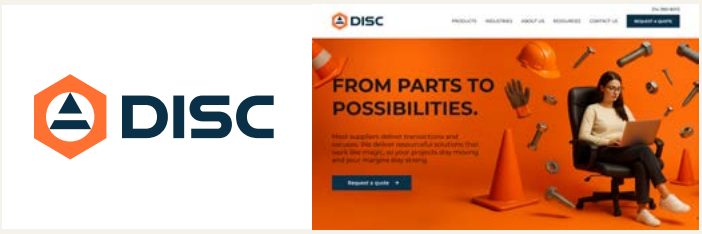
Don't be the Grateful Dead van guy. But do be the brand your customers can't ignore.

Case Story

From Generic Supplier to Industrial Magician

Client: Dallas Industrial Supply Corporation (DISC)
Industry: B2B Industrial Supply
Problem: Looked and sounded like every other mid-size supplier in the industry. No clear story. No emotional edge. No reason to choose them over a "Too Big" or "Ankle Biter" competitor.





Before

- Website was a patchwork of vague product info, stock photos, and feature lists
- Messaging focused on generic promises like "fast service" and "competitive pricing"
- Visual identity used a typical blue-and-gray palette, basic sans serif font, and zero own-able motifs
- No brand personality or differentiator, just another parts supplier blending into the noise

After

- **Positioning Reframe:** DISC is no longer "just a supplier", they're your go-to partner for magical resourcefulness
- **Messaging Platform:** Built around the "Margin Defender" persona that speaks directly to stressed buyers balancing cost, speed, and quality
- **Visual Identity:** Introduced a bold hexagon-meets-alchemy symbol as the new mark, anchored by DISC Orange, a unique, energizing color in the sea of blue and gray-scale competitors
- **Voice & Tone:** Down-to-earth, smart, with a dose of swagger. Think: magician meets mechanic
- **Website Rewrite:** Structured content around quick scannability, clear value props, and strategic CTAs

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Impact

- Internal team finally aligned around a clear story and visual system they're proud to share
- Rebrand became the foundation for launching outbound promotion, sales efforts, and trade show materials
- DISC's founder now uses phrases like "industrial magician" and "we work like magic" to describe what they do and buyers remember it

"From parts to possibilities"
DISC's new brand promise, rooted in Magical Resourcefulness

→ To see more of this unblanded transformation, click here.

"Partnering with Irwin Collective gave us a brand identity that truly captures who we are. They didn't just deliver great creative, They helped us define our positioning, sharpen our message, and build a brand system that really sets us apart. It's exactly what we needed to move forward with confidence."

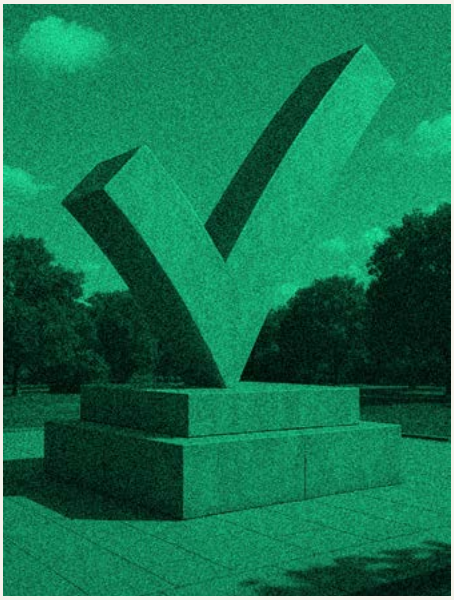
Duane Rouse, Founder of DISC.

UNBLANDING CHECKLIST

Before you hit publish:

- [ ] Are we expressing what we believe, not just what we sell?
- [ ] Does this look/sound like us?
- [ ] Would our customer feel something reading this?
- [ ] Could our competitors say this?

If your answer is ‘meh,’ you have a bland brand. Start from the top.



You've got a solid product and a sharp team. Let's make sure your brand shows it.

READY TO UNBLAND YOUR BRAND?

→ Visit irwincollective.net
→ Schedule a Discovery Call
→ Or just email hello@irwincollective.net and say "Let's go."

Irwin Collective

Unblanding boring brands in complex categories.
Strategy-first. Ego-free. Results-focused.



IRWINCOLLECTIVE.NET