

THE LEAN SERIES

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Laura Busche

LEAN BRANDING

Creating Dynamic Brands
to Generate Conversion

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“If you’ve got a product and your thoughts about branding are ‘I don’t even know where to start’—read *Lean Branding*. Laura Busche’s book lays out what you need to do, why it matters, and how to do it quickly and easily. You’ll have a brand as great as your product in no time.”

—Cindy Alvarez, Director of User Experience, Yammer (a Microsoft company),
and author of *Lean Customer Development*

“I’m a technologist, not a brand manager...well, until now. *Lean Branding* changed everything I thought about branding, and gave me exactly the tools I needed to develop and execute the brands for my startups.”

—Eric Freeman, PhD, cofounder of WickedlySmart, and former CTO, Disney Online

“If you want your startup to fail then ignore this book. Branding has always been a soft skill. Laura makes it a hard science.”

—Bronson Taylor, cofounder Growth Hacker TV

“*Lean Branding* is a book that anyone concerned with their brand—startups, small businesses, marketers—should have in their library and refer to over and over again. Laura Busche guides you through the ins-and-outs of creating a brand and she includes some amazing worksheets and tools for all aspects of the process of the brand creation lifecycle. I can’t wait to get this for all my startup clients.”

—Erin Malone, Partner, Tangible UX, LLC

“Laura Busche has written a deeply insightful book that offers readers a pragmatic approach for turning a ‘bunch of features’ into branded products that customers buy. Branding is not something that comes easily to engineers, but Laura’s book makes the topic approachable.”

—Kelly Goetsch, Director, Product Management, Oracle

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Praise for *Lean Branding*

“If you’ve got a product and your thoughts about branding are ‘I don’t even know where to start’—read Lean Branding. Laura Busche’s book lays out for you what you need to do, why it matters, and how to do it quickly and easily. You’ll have a brand as great as your product in no time.”

Cindy Alvarez—Director of User Experience, Yammer (a Microsoft company), author of *Lean Customer Development*

“Establishing a brand for a startup or small enterprise in today’s marketplace is more important than ever. Lean Branding is a practical, insightful guide that will quickly prove its worth in an often-overlooked area that is fundamental to the success of every business. It should be in every entrepreneur’s toolkit.”

Roy Thomasson—Founder and Chair, Board of Directors, Young Americas Business Trust, Washington, DC

“If you want your startup to fail then ignore this book. Branding has always been a soft skill. Laura makes it a hard science.”

Bronson Taylor—Cofounder, Growth Hacker TV

“As editor of Smashing Magazine, I have had several opportunities to work with Laura and her writing is always flawless. However, the writing is always approachable; as if she is standing in front of you explaining things to you. In her own words: ‘I decided to take a look at brands from three different lenses: business, design, and psychology.’ And this is what makes this book unique: a combination of her personal writing style and looking at branding from a larger scope and perspective. As a design educator, this is a book I would definitely like to use in my design classes.”

Alma Hoffmann—Assistant Professor, University of South Alabama,
Editor of the Design section at *Smashing Magazine*

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I can’t wait to get this for all my startup clients.”

Erin Malone—Partner, Tangible UX, LLC

“An intuitive step-by-step guide to developing and promoting your company or startup’s brand. Easy to follow and implement, Lean Branding manages to discuss topics such as marketing with sincerity and integrity.”

Carmen Medina—Rebels at Work.com

“Laura Busche has written a deeply insightful book that offers readers a pragmatic approach for turing a ‘bunch of features’ into branded products that customers buy. Branding is not something that comes easily to engineers, but Laura’s book makes the topic approachable.”

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Lean Branding

by Laura Busche

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Foreword

When new startup teams begin learning the Lean Startup methodology, they often ask me when the period of experimentation will end so they can start building the “real product.” I have to break it to them that there’s no such thing as the final product—every product launch is an opportunity to discover how to better delight the customer. The “Build-Measure-Learn” process begins when we ask what we are hoping to discover about our customer or our strategy—and it should continue long after our first product launch.

At the core of *Lean Branding* is the idea that just as products are never truly finished, brands, too, must be committed to adaption and evolution. Companies cannot afford to let their brands stagnate or think of them as a “set of features,” argues Laura Busche. Instead, they must build chameleon brands that “adapt to consumer’s ever-changing needs and desires” by putting their assumptions to the test and using what they’ve learned to iterate and adapt.

This is easier said than done.

I’ve worked with “builders” from many different sectors. Even if the materials they work with are very different—some write code, others build healthcare devices or heavy industrial equipment, still others design user experiences—what they share is a desire to use their expertise to build “high-quality” products to present to customers. But the Lean Startup methodology challenges us to rethink the notion of quality. The Build-Measure-Learn loop is a way to overcome the very human tendency to

over-engineer solutions before we've tested whether our "solution" has anything to do with a real customer problem.

Busche also discusses the importance of measuring the right things. The metrics-obsessed among us can get very excited by any sign that we're getting some traction—but it's important to distinguish between "vanity metrics" (the ones that look good on paper but tell us nothing about our potential for growth) and "actionable metrics" (data we can learn from and use to further the process of experimentation and iteration).

In the section on Measurement, Busche provides some useful examples of the metrics that matter—the ones that are connected to the way our businesses make money or grow our customer base. Only by changing customer behavior in some way—whether customers make a purchase, sign up for a newsletter, agree to share their time or make some other exchange of value—can we be sure that our experiments were a success. This process of experimentation and measuring what our customers value is also a way to foster deep relationships over time—the hallmark of successful brand development and a great way, I'd argue, to deliver products and services that deserve the title "high-quality."

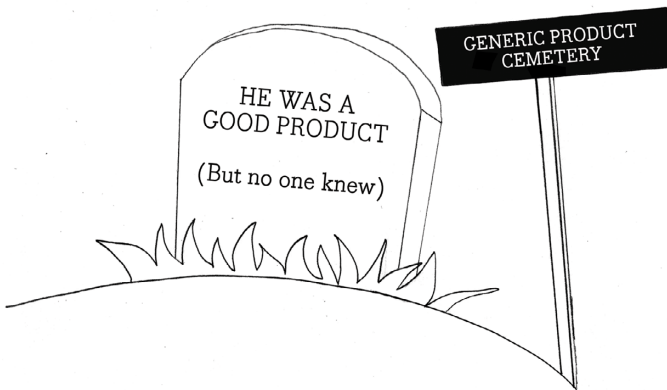
Eric Ries
San Francisco, CA
September 3, 2014

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Preface

Why I Wrote This Book

I've had it. I can't stand to see another killer product ignored by the press, investors, and customers because its founders had no clue about branding. Because they didn't have the time, resources, and knowledge to turn the right heads around, at the right time. Maybe that product is an app, a service, a combination of both...maybe that product is *you!*



Good products shouldn't have to die because we failed to send their message across.

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Branding Today

To say that Lean Branding is an important skill in this chaotic marketplace of ours is a *massive* understatement. Barriers to entry are as low as ever, competition is fierce, and everyone I know has a severe inbox problem. People's attention has never been this divided, their demands as sophisticated, or their access to information as easy.

If building a disruptive, dynamic brand is not in your plans, neither is profit.

That being said, here's the killer tool that I've been preparing for you:

A DIY branding guide for startups that hate waste and love customers

A brand is your impression in consumers' minds, and the strategy with which you build it together. Your brand doesn't compete with product: it *is* the product, *and* its price, *and* the first business card that I get from you, your *ultralight, superfast* interface...*and* the (hopefully) soothing voice of whoever takes your customer service calls. Whether you're creating a new product, a new service, or a *new you*, or you're just looking for inspiration, this book is here to guide you into turning outsiders into customers with a high-conversion brand.

Early-stage, unfunded startups can't afford to hire multimillion-dollar agencies. This toolkit is here to tell you *that's OK*. Actually, it's more than OK. It will allow you to embark on a fascinating journey: an expedition to find which combination of brand symbols, story, and strategy gets you the customer traction that your product needs.

Lean Branding sheds light on the traditionally obscure process of brand development, showing you how to create, communicate, and sell a meaningful brand by measuring its performance continuously. With over 100 DIY branding tactics and inspiring case studies, *these* are tools you need under your belt.

It's a branded world, after all.

Newsflash: nobody buys "a bunch of features." People buy from *meaningful* brands that help them go from point A to point B in their life. *Propulsive* brands. And that, my friends, is the very reason why you bought this book. So let's get to work. Your high-conversion brand is officially in the making.

Who This Book Is For

I'll be honest: I believe that many of the world's problems could be solved if those who actually know how to solve them spent more time sharing and

less time making their knowledge sound like nonsense. It's hard to learn about great branding when even the best branding practitioners make it seem mysterious. I wish all the best to my colleagues, but *Lean Branding* is no such book. If you're also sick of hearing fuzzy terms and useless acronyms and would like to understand how to build a dynamic brand that gets, keeps, and grows customers: welcome, I've been expecting you for months!

At this point you probably have an idea that keeps you up at night: coding, writing, planning, hustling...putting in the extra hour (or eight). I've been there: I've been the sleep-deprived, passionate dreamer wanting to put a product in everyone's hands. I've also been there for others like us: for the last two years, I've been a mentor in the Colombian government's Apps.co program. I looked more than 300 entrepreneurs in the eye as we built brands for their 90+ startups. Let me tell you something: those eyes were full of the passion required to disrupt this world.

If only the world knew them.

Maybe you're reading this and thinking, "If only they knew me!" Has it ever crossed your mind that you could be your own agency? What if I told you that there is a way for you to start building a powerful brand today? The type of brand that opens hearts and wallets. A type of brand that also iterates, learns from customers, and offers ever-evolving shortcuts to their self-realization.

As a marketing consultant, I'm approached by people expecting to find a magic phrase that will absolutely, positively, *for sure* guarantee success. Let me address this straightaway: that is *not* what I do for a living. I do not have special powers,* and brand development is not witchcraft. Brand development is (or should be) an evidence-based process where you deduce a combination of symbols, story, and strategy that will represent your offer in an increasingly chaotic marketplace.

(Please slowly repeat that word to yourself: *chaotic*.)

But I can't blame you. We marketers have kept brand development strategies a secret for too long, and, as much as I'd like to tell you that there's a simple checklist behind the whole process, that's just not true. We're also obsessed with saying that brand development takes forever. I learned the hard way that this is not how startups roll.

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* I must admit, though, that I am working hard on these two: "When you start to develop your powers of empathy and imagination, the whole world opens up to you." —Susan Sarandon

What would you do if you only had eight weeks to go from zero to saleable brand? This is the challenge that I faced with over 90 startups between 2012 and 2014. *Lean Branding* contains the lessons I learned along the way. Fast forward: it *can* be done.

Lean Branding is a guide for fast-growth companies and the teams that build them. It introduces concepts that are familiar to brand managers and chief marketing officers, in a way that does not intimidate product managers, developers, or cofounders—no matter what their background is. If you are building a brand, no matter what your business card says, this book is for you.

What's Inside This Book

Lean Branding is your “Phone-a-Friend” lifeline. This book is here to help you wrap that killer product you’re building with a robust yet flexible DIY branding strategy that gets you traction. Please know that this is not something you get over with...*ever*. As long as your company is alive, so is your brand. And as a living being, it breathes, eats, reproduces, and gets haircuts. *Lean Branding* is here to show you how to make these important decisions:

- You’ll find step-by-step instructions to build and measure 25 essential brand strategy ingredients, including:
 - Name
 - Typography and imagery
 - Landing page
 - Social media
 - Email lists
 - Press releases
 - Promotional videos
 - Blogging
 - Collateral
 - Slide decks
 - Many more
- This book contains 100+ DIY branding tactics and inspiring case studies to boost your brand with limited time and resources.

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- Branding on steroids: you will learn the secrets to hack growth with storytelling and make your product/service catch on fast—from a brand-appropriate standpoint. Traction will come, but not at the expense of identity loss.
- Design and business are married. You'll learn to embrace this fact and put it to work for you in Chapter 4, when we create your brand's visual symbols step by step.
- *Lean Branding* is packed with graphics, templates, cheatsheets, and tutorials to help you get, keep, and grow customers—minus the fuzzy jargon.
- No nonsense, no obscure acronyms, no secrets. We're hacking our way through this crazy marketplace (and I'm on your team).
- I am, first and foremost, a business mind. I was then drawn to marketing, *then* psychology, and only *then* design. I operate in that order. Every single line in this book goes in the direction of getting, keeping, or growing customers. This book isn't here to make you look pretty (though you probably will).

How to Navigate This Book

There *is* a method to the madness. *Great branding execution doesn't come out of wizardry books, but if you focus enough, it will come out of customer interaction, a coherent action plan, and constant measurement.* *Lean Branding* is such an action plan, and in case you're wondering, it does include checklists.

We'll be working from the inside out and around the *build-measure-loop* cycle. Chapters 1 and 2 outline what will be our action plan, and Chapter 3 is where the actual building begins. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 feature step-by-step instructions for creating the 25+ ingredients of your brand story, symbols, and strategy. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 cover how to measure if they actually trigger *conversion*—that is, take visitors down an action path that you've created for them (e.g., buying from you or subscribing to your updates). Finally, Chapters 9, 10, and 11 will show you how to iterate: redesigning, repositioning, and rechanneling whenever necessary.



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