

# VENTURES

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR SMALL, MINORITY- AND WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESSES

## Breakthrough Brand Strategy: Sharpening Your Focus to Increase Revenue and Drive Growth

By Alice E. Wendt, Wendt Partners

**A**s a business owner the most important question you can ask at the beginning of each day is, “What can my team and I do today to increase revenue?” Entrepreneurs leading growing businesses often become paralyzed trying to answer this question consistently. At other times, they become comfortable focusing on one area and ignoring others with which they may be less familiar.

The answer may depend on your focus. Your attention might be on spreading your message (marketing), identifying and pursuing opportunities (sales), or improving your ability to serve existing customers (operations).

Addressing sales, marketing and operations together in a coherent and integrated manner requires a brand strategy—one you can use to make faster decisions, select areas to invest in and guide your team to execute that strategy.

Breakthrough brand strategy recognizes that what customers and prospects experience, believe and conclude about your business (your brand) is the most important factor in your company’s success. The best way to increase customer loyalty and pull prospects toward your company is to focus carefully on how your sales, marketing and operations can work together to create a powerful brand experience.

Focusing on your brand gives you the centerpiece—the linchpin—that was previously missing from traditional business planning. So, how do you go about creating a breakthrough brand strategy? By asking the right questions. The following questions correspond to a layer on what we call the brand strategy pyramid.

### Question 1: What is my target market?

Clearly identifying your target market sets the foundation for brand strategy success. And in case you are wondering if target marketing is for every business, consider the case of Apple, Inc. It made a decision that its target market is the consumer technology buyer, not the business technology buyer. In fact, the company is so committed to this focus it routinely

eliminates products that, while profitable, take the company outside of its consumer focus.

For example, in 2011 Apple discontinued its Xserve line of business-class network file servers, much to the dismay of business customers worldwide. Why would Apple do that? Because the company knew even a successful product can drain resources away from its target market focus, and the engineers and developers working on Xserve were needed in other areas of the company. If it’s true for Apple—a company with \$100 billion in cash on hand—then it is true for your company.

### Question 2: Is my business capable of competing in this target market?

The answer to this question may suggest changes in your response to the first question. Once you have identified your target market think carefully about your company’s strengths and weaknesses in two ways. First, examine your business model (how you go to market), and second, review your business execution (how you deliver to customers).

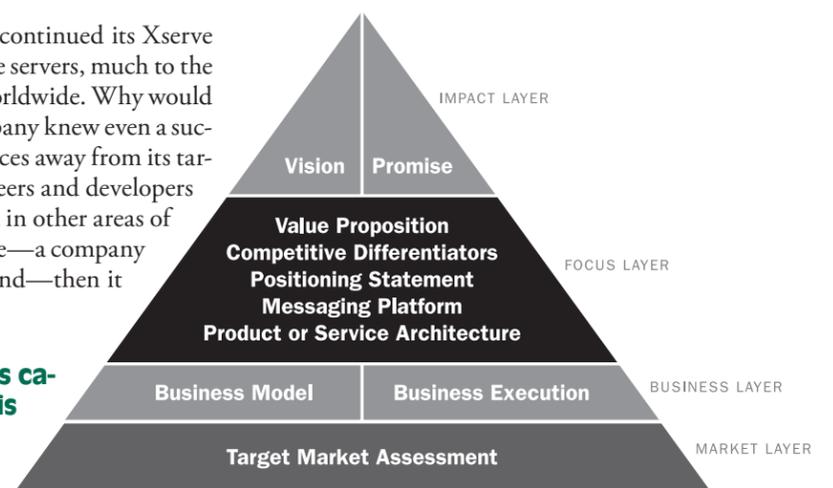
For example, an accounting firm whose principals are primarily familiar with private-sector accounting practices may want to compete in the government contracting market, but without a team member schooled in federal compliance rules there may be other markets that are a better fit.

### Question 3: How can I focus my team on serving this target market?

Successfully identifying your target market and aligning your business to compete there is only valuable if you focus intently on serving that market. To help you accomplish this, consider using these five tools:

- **Value Proposition**—Creating a value proposition means establishing a business case for the value that your company will uniquely deliver to its target market—value that customers cannot get from anyone else.

### BRAND STRATEGY PYRAMID



- **Competitive Differentiators**—Your competitive differentiators are specific explanations of how and where your company differs from other firms serving your target market.
- **Positioning Statement**—Examine your target market and identify where your competitors “live” in it, then describe what position in that market your company will “own”.
- **Messaging Platform**—The messaging platform takes what you have described internally and presents it in statements that will be understandable and compelling for external customers and prospects.
- **Product or Service Architecture**—Look at how your products and services are packaged, presented, priced and sold, and identify ways in which you can sharpen your advantage by making important changes that will point customers to your value proposition.

### Question 4: What must I do now to see revenue impact from my strategy?

To start seeing revenue results you need to commit to managing your entire business around your brand strategy. Two tools to help you achieve this are:

- **Brand Vision**—Your brand vision is a picture of how the world would be different if your products or services were fully used by every customer in the target market. For example, Ikea has become one of the world’s most successful retailers by defining its brand vision around a concept it calls “life improvement.” It brings the do-it-yourself

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# STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

## Finding Opportunities in the Federal Digital Government Strategy

By Jason Bloomberg, ZapThink, a Dovèl Technologies Company

**W**hat comes to mind when you envision technology at the federal government? Rows of ancient mainframes at the IRS slowly cranking away at tax returns? World War II-era radar systems at the Federal Aviation Administration?

While it's true most agencies still struggle with older legacy systems, others have been actively modernizing, consolidating, and streamlining technology across the government, and reworking how people inside and outside the government leverage that technology.

This past May, the White House released its digital government strategy. This document lays out a technology strategy with three core objectives: enable an increasingly mobile American populace to get government information anywhere from any device, revamp government technology procurement and leverage government data to spur innovation and serve the American people better. The White House bases its digital strategy on information and a customer-centric approach, leveraging a shared platform that guarantees security and privacy.

There is no end of opportunities for citizens and small businesses to make the most of the digital strategy. For example, the information-centric part of the strategy seeks to "liberate" content (in unstructured

**There is no end of opportunities for citizens and small businesses to make the most of the digital strategy.**

formats such as documents) as well as structured data (in databases, for example) and publish that information in an open way. By "open," the digital strategy goes beyond simply making such information easily accessible via the Web. It also means that anyone should be able to access the information via automated, software-driven tools as well. As a result, small businesses can incorporate government data into their Web sites and social media outlets in support of a wide variety of business models.

Furthermore, the shared platform aspect of the digital strategy focuses on creating an environment for mobility. This means more than simply allowing people to access information from their smartphones and iPads. Mobility means changing how, when and where both citizens and government employees work and interact with each other. As a result, supporting mobility requires fundamental organizational shifts and requires change that extends well beyond technology itself.

To support such change, the digital strategy calls for a Digital Services Innovation Center and Advisory Group that will work together in conjunction with the Federal CIO Council to drive shared platform

solutions across the government. The goal of these efforts is to foster cross-agency information sharing as well as to accelerate the adoption of mobile workforce solutions.

Perhaps the toughest change for the government to institute, however, is how it procures technology. Traditionally, agencies have taken a fragmented approach to procurement: Each agency decides what it wants, sends out a request for proposal and selects a provider independent of what other agencies or other groups within the same agency are buying. In contrast, the digital strategy calls for centralized purchasing as part of a broad shift to enterprise-wide asset management and procurement. A prime example of this approach: agencies are leveraging cloud computing, in part because of its pay-as-you-go pricing model. But the cloud story doesn't end there. The government is also pre-approving cloud providers so agencies do not have to go through the vetting process each time they want to move something to the cloud.

The fundamental goal is to shift how the government provides services to its citizens, as well as how government employees do their jobs. The digital strategy means to create a space for citizens to become partners in building a better government for everyone. All you need in order to benefit from this rich set of capabilities and information is imagination. ■

Jason Bloomberg is president of ZapThink, a Dovèl Technologies company, which provides public and private sector enterprises with advice and education to assist in creating an architecture that meets business needs. For more information, contact Jason at 703-288-5300 or [jbloomberg@zapthink.com](mailto:jbloomberg@zapthink.com), or [www.zapthink.com](http://www.zapthink.com).

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The Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA) promotes Fairfax County as a world-class center of commerce and trade and the technology hub of the east coast. The FCEDA assists businesses interested in locating, relocating or expanding their commercial office or industrial operations in Fairfax County. Services are available on a confidential, no-cost basis. As an independent authority created under state law, the FCEDA operates under the direction of seven Commissioners appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Its activities are funded by Fairfax County.

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### BRANDING continued from cover

energy of the home improvement industry to the business of home furnishings.

Ikea defines its brand vision as creating a better life for people by ensuring that its products are comfortable, functional and enjoyable. As a result, the company is committed to offering products and services at many different price points, and focusing consistently on doing more with less—both in terms of customers' budgets and in terms of home size and space. This is the key to Ikea's ability to create a global brand in the home furnishings industry, where most companies only appeal to certain cultures or income brackets.

- **Brand Promise**—Your brand promise is where sales, marketing and operations come together in your company. For example, if you own an independent pharmacy and decide to compete in the marketplace on the basis of your customer service, then you might define your brand promise around delivering a personalized experience to each customer. To deliver a personalized experience means making your registered pharmacists available to consult on each prescription, delivering medications to customers after hours, answering calls from physicians to consult on complex cases, and following up with insurance companies on your customers' behalf.

Once you start defining the specifics of your brand promise, then the demands of delivering on that promise start to become clear. That's why creating a focused and precise brand promise—one that you can and will deliver on every day—is essential.

Breakthrough brand strategy sets the stage for your business to achieve powerful and sustained growth. By focusing on brand as the centerpiece of your business, you will find greater buy-in from your team and greater engagement from your customers—two key attributes necessary to achieve lasting business impact for the future of your company. ■

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## Finding Balance in Workplace Wellness: Part Two

By Erinn Callahan, Sade Clarity, LLC

**S**hould I eat fewer carbohydrates or choose low-fat products? I may purchase organic produce, but what about the chemicals in my face-wash? Do I swear off alcohol or can I strike a balance? In regards to health, chances are you have asked yourself these same questions. Oftentimes, people give up embarking on the path to a healthier lifestyle because they feel it is too overwhelming.

The process of designing and setting up a workplace wellness program can also be affected by the same apprehension and confusion. In order to stay competitive in the marketplace, an investment in wellness is essential. Where do you start?

Regardless of budget, a company cannot simply buy wellness. Unfortunately, the idea of taking on such an elusive, overwhelming task often leaves business-owners ready to throw in the towel. Wellness may not be a product available for purchase, but it is simply a matter of investment.

Many corporate wellness solutions firms offer a variety of inexpensive corporate offerings designed to engage employees and achieve results. Offerings include weekly newsletters that educate clients on health and wellness, walking/running groups before or after work and a comprehensive online portal for instant access to individualized goals.

Whether your company is looking to expand existing wellness program offerings or create a program from the ground up, it is important to understand employees insurance claims. Reviewing and assessing these claims gives a better sense of what problems your employees are facing regarding prescription drugs, workers compensation and demographics. Claims analytics adds an extra dimension with the ability to see what an individual spends and anticipate future spending.

When seeking information on the offerings of a program from a corporate wellness solutions firm, it is important to understand how they track return on investment. On average, wellness programs can reduce health-care costs by 26 percent. An effective program should apply to all employees, both healthy and at-risk. This program also should be able to establish and track appropriate measurements including biometric screenings, absenteeism, participation and claims cost. There is no one-size-fits-all program, but the data and numbers can direct your choice of firms to develop a program that fits the needs of your company.

A truly “turnkey” program should be comprehensive and engaging, customizable, accessible to employees and effectively communicated. A program should be built around wellness goals created by each employee, with incentives to achieve these goals.

Programs take time to develop and blend with company culture. The long-term cost savings depend on how much your company is willing to spend. It is possible to see change in as little as six months, but most companies see results between 18 months to three years.

Online portals are often used to guide the investment in wellness by offering biometric surveys and tests. They also ask lifestyle-based questions on stress levels, physical activity, eating patterns, alcohol/tobacco usage, etc. These findings are confidential and shared with the employee to allow them to track goals and possibly receive counseling. Survey information can be useful in deciding where to allocate resources, whether it is used for anti-smoking, diabetes prevention, or high-blood-pressure counseling.

Whatever the goals of your company, determine what you want from a wellness program and do your research. There are a variety of ways that a wellness program can increase your ROI and meet the needs of employees. ■

Erinn Callahan is the wellness editor at Sade Clarity, LLC, a wellness solutions firm that helps individuals achieve balance in body, mind and spirit. For more information, contact Erinn at 703-850-1785 or [info@sadeclarity.com](mailto:info@sadeclarity.com), or [www.sadeclarity.com](http://www.sadeclarity.com).

### IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## Women Veteran Entrepreneur Corps – A National Business Growth Initiative

**T**he Fairfax County EDA, Women’s Business Center of Northern Virginia, Women President’s Executive Organization, Women as Veteran Entrepreneurs and SCORE have joined together to form the Women Veteran-Owned Business Network. They will present a series of four workshops targeted specifically for Women Veteran business owners. The series, “Coffee, Coaching and Counseling” will serve to educate, inform and provide business counseling as well as networking opportunities to women veteran-owned companies. The series is slated to begin January 9.

Given the increasing number of women veteran entrepreneurs, Capital One and Count Me In for Women’s Economic Independence created the Women Veteran Entrepreneur Corps (WVEC) to help female veterans overcome their business challenges. The WVEC is a three-year business growth initiative aimed at women business owners who are either veterans or spouses/domestic partners of veterans looking to grow their small businesses. The program will focus on reaching women veteran business owners who are past the start-up phase, but are encountering challenges that are blocking continued business growth.

In addition to the WVEC training program, Count Me In and Capital One recently announced at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting, a national conference and business plan competition, to be held next spring. The event will be held in Tysons Corner, Va., on April 29-30, 2013. As a sign of commitment, Capital One has donated \$750,000 and services to the WVEC program. This forum will gather 300 women veterans and business growth

experts together where they will benefit from a variety of panels and workshops, many of which will be led by other female veterans. Capital One and Count Me In have engaged organizations and other authorities on entrepreneurship and women veteran’s affairs to form a Women Veterans Steering Committee. These individuals will ensure program and outreach efforts are appropriate and impactful for the women veteran business owners program.

The National WVEC Steering Committee includes a diverse group of public- and private-sector executives from Fairfax County:

- Susan Lee-Merrow, Virginia Small Business Development Centers, George Mason University;
- Pauline Leitch, Director Northern Virginia Women’s Business Center;
- Kathy Roth-Duoquet, CEO, Blue Star Families;
- Karen Smaw, Director, Business Diversity, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority; and
- Tatiana Stead, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Capital One, LTC (Ret.), U.S. Air Force Reserve. ■

For more information, about Count Me In’s Women Veteran Entrepreneur Corps initiative visit: <http://countmein.org/event/wvec/home>. For more information about the Women Veteran-Owned Business Network, contact Karen Smaw, FCEDA Director, Business Diversity at 703-790-0600 or [ksmaw@fceda.org](mailto:ksmaw@fceda.org).

# FYI . . .

**. . . The FCEDA, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Business Assistance (DBA) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), conducts a monthly workshop, "Entrepreneurship 101: Starting a Business in Fairfax County."**

The workshop provides an overview of start-up basics (licenses and permits); DBA workforce service and training programs; and SBA resources, financing and certification programs. The workshop is held the first Tuesday of each month from 7:45 AM–10:30 AM. There is no cost to attend, but pre-registration is required. Workshops in 2013 are scheduled for January 8, February 5, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4, September 10, October 1 and November 5. For more information or to register for the workshops, visit [www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/starting-business-seminar](http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/starting-business-seminar), or call 703-790-0600.

**. . . The Fairfax County Department of Purchasing and Supply Management Agency, Office of Small Business is sponsoring a free monthly workshop, "Selling to Fairfax County."**

The workshops are held the third Wednesday of each month. You will have an opportunity to meet staff from the county's Purchasing Department and discuss upcoming contracting opportunities. All workshops are free of charge and are held at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Va., from 8:00 AM–10:00 AM. For more information or to register, call 703 324-3212 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpsm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpsm).

**. . . The Virginia Employment Through Entrepreneurship Consortium (VETEC) is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor that provides job seekers from northern Virginia, Richmond and the Norfolk/Virginia Beach areas with training and technical assistance to start their own businesses. Participants are randomly selected and receive training in areas such as the basics**

for starting a business, accounting, finance and credit, and sales and marketing. They also receive one-on-one counseling services, mentoring and networking opportunities. Employing Northern Virginia Through Entrepreneurship (ENOVATE), operating under the VETEC program, offers eligible job seekers entrepreneurship training and technical assistance. Along with the SkillSource Group, Inc., the other consortium partner organizations include Northern Virginia Community College, the Business Development Assistance Group and the Fairfax County Department of Family Services. For information on the VETEC program, contact Rebecca Bennett, project director, VETEC, at [rebecca.bennett@myskillsource.org](mailto:rebecca.bennett@myskillsource.org). For information on the ENOVATE program, contact Weyni Ghebremedhin at [wghebr@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:wghebr@fairfaxcounty.gov) or Jessica Cadima at [jessica.cadima@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:jessica.cadima@fairfaxcounty.gov).

**. . . The Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) 2013 Summit & Salute to Women's Business Enterprises**

will take place March 13-14 at the Baltimore Hilton Hotel in Baltimore, Md. The event brings together America's leading corporations, government agencies, women business owners and strategic partner organizations. The program is filled with important business growth principles, informal business development opportunities and one-on-one networking sessions with national Corporate Members. For more information, visit [www.wbenc.org/summit-salute](http://www.wbenc.org/summit-salute).

**. . . The Community Business Partnership will present the 8th Annual Veterans in Business Conference.**

Scheduled for March 21, 2013, at the Army-Navy Country Club in Arlington, Va., the conference provides education, networking and business opportunities for veteran and service disabled veteran small business owners. Visit [www.veteransbusinessconference.com](http://www.veteransbusinessconference.com) for more information and to register.

## PROCUREMENT ACADEMY RETURNS

The FCEDA has kicked off its Procurement Academy, a series of 10 workshops running through June 2013 designed to help businesses navigate the government contracting process. The workshops are appropriate for procurement novices and those who are seasoned in the contracting arena and will emphasize practical strategies needed to land government contracts.

The 2013 dates and topics of the sessions are: Jan. 16: Capture Planning, Proposal Development and Win Strategies; Feb. 20: Legal Aspects of Government Contracting; Mar. 20: Woman-Owned Businesses—Maximizing Opportunities in Government Contracting; Apr. 17: Small Business Legislative Update; May 15: Teaming, Joint Ventures and Strategic Alliances; June 12: Marketing to the Government—Best Practices, Market Intelligence, Tips and Techniques.

Sessions are held from 7:30 AM–10:30 AM at Teqcorner, 1616 Anderson Road, Tysons Corner. For more information or to register, visit [www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/procurement-academy](http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/procurement-academy).

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Fourth Quarter 2012

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