

Branding and the international community

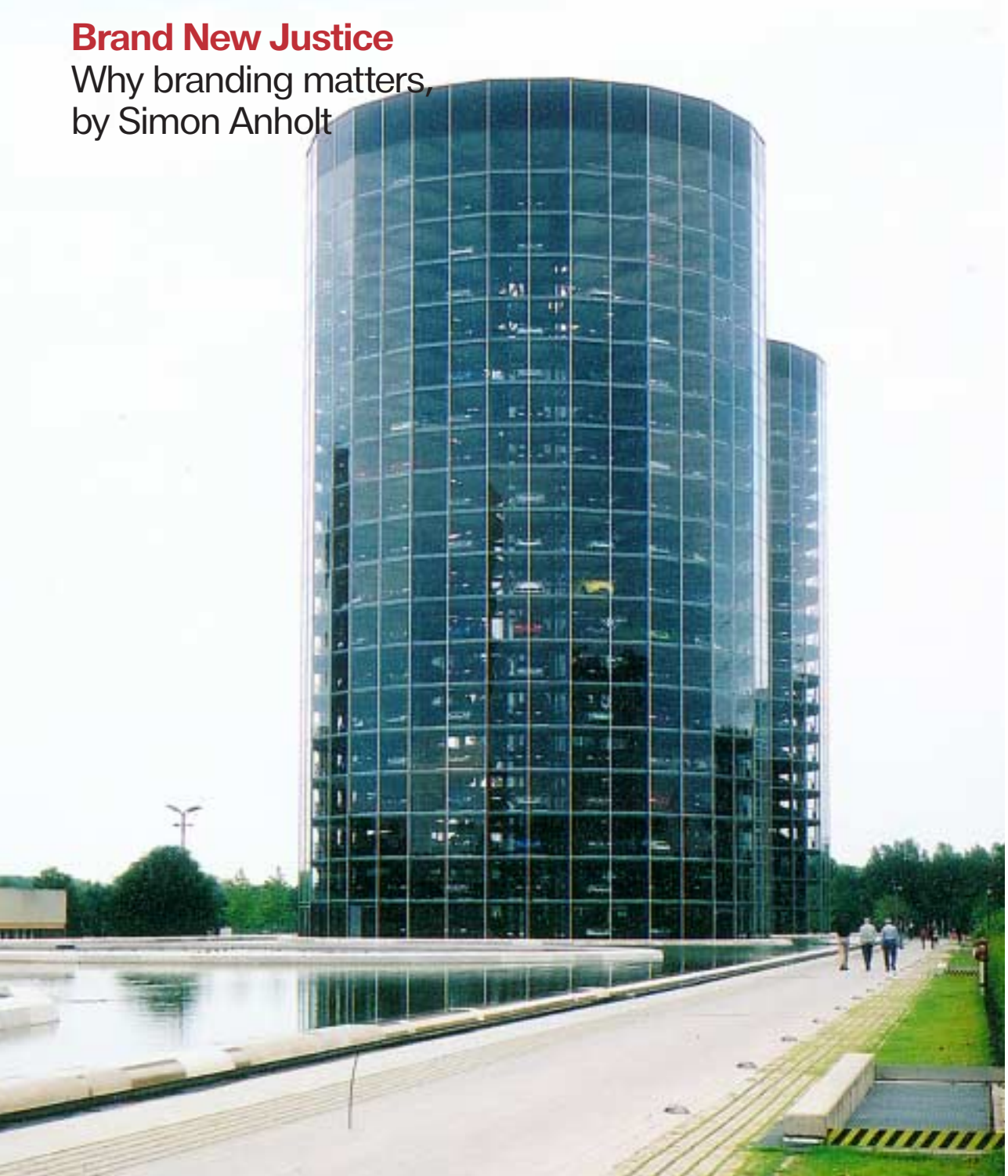
Foreign policy with commercial lessons

Beyond Branding

Ideas to save business

Brand New Justice

Why branding matters,
by Simon Anholt



Well *Beyond* Branding

Beyond Branding is more than a book: it is a real call for change in the way business is conducted. That change does not start with branding departments, but with *you* as an individual.

Malcolm Allan

Malcolm Allan, Dip.TP, M.Sc. is himself very well beyond branding. He is the founder and a director of three companies: Inergy, which specializes in the creation of intellectual capital through creativity and innovation; atLeadership (Authentic Transformational Leadership), a company which enables individuals and groups to realize their leadership potential and the development of people as the true brand of organizations; and Placebrands, a company which, as its name suggests, enables places to develop their brand, which he created with Simon Anholt, Sicco Van Gelder and Niclas Ljungberg.

WITH THE publication of *Beyond Branding*, we have commenced a debate on the real value of

branding when it is aligned with transparency of decision-making and operations, authenticity of belief about self and the purpose of our organizations, and the need to recognize that our people—you included—are our organizations' true brand. This is about what organizations do and say in their interactions with each other, their customers, suppliers, stakeholders and the media.

We are not just arguing for branding to “clean up its act”; we are arguing for branding and the other disciplines, functions and professions involved in organizations' operations—business in particular, but also including government and the public sector—to reconsider seriously their current *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*, the way they operate and the way they think, and ask themselves if it is as truly effective and of value as they hope it might be.

The issues we tackle in *Beyond Branding* affect the core of our organizations: how we see their purpose, their “cause”, their reason for coming into existence, how they go about their business, how they treat their customers, how they live out their values, how they deliver on their promises and how those promises are framed. These are all contributors to their brand and affect it.

On the web site of one of my companies (www.atLeadership.com/customers.html), I have set out a list of the characteristics of the type of organizations that we wish to work with, summarized below. These describe the kind of organizations that are going beyond branding as we currently experience it, beyond the derisory treatment of employees and customers that we all too often observe and experience, moving into a state of “well-being” that is based on a clear “cause” for their existence. They do so with a clarity of vision on how they will live up to that cause, making it easy for both employees and customers to relate to them, through being entirely transparent about who they are, what they do and what they can do for you. They are organizations that:

- are led by individuals who truly know themselves and what they want to do, who are aligned to the vision, cause or purpose of their organization, and whose beliefs and values are in line with those of the organization;
- are led by individuals who take their responsibility for leadership seriously, recognizing that it is different from management and that it is a crucial determinant of how their organization and their people perform;
- recognize that their people matter and that they are their true brand in that all that they say and do conveys what the organization is about to customers and stakeholders;
- know that the potential of their people is the real source of their competitive edge or their service provision;
- invest in their people, in their skills and competences, to enable them to produce fantastic products and provide exemplary customer service;

- value learning and encourage their people to constantly learn through all that they do, sharing what they know and the lessons they learn with each other, customers and stakeholders;
- value what their people know and use it as the basis for innovation to develop new products and services;
- value creativity and innovation and create cultures in which they are supported as the basis for improved or new products and services;
- effectively manage their knowledge of their people, what they do, their products and services, their customers, their competitors, the markets and the environment in which they operate;
- recognize that in addition to their responsibilities to their people, their customers and their shareholders, they have responsibilities to stakeholders and those around them where they operate in a wider community;
- recognize that they can make a contribution to improving the environment and communities in which they operate.

Is this too much to ask of organizations? Is it too much to ask of our institutions in the public sector? Is it too much to ask of self?

Just imagine how it must *feel* to work in line with your own values, to be working for an organization whose values reflect yours, for customers who truly value what you provide to them or make for them, for a community which values your being in its midst and for a society that regards you as value-adding in all that you do.

Can you feel what it might be like to be a responsible person, in a responsible workplace, with a responsible organization, one that is open, transparent, true to its values?

Can you feel how *well* you would be in that situation? Feel the energy, the intent to add value, the desire to add to the sum total of the world’s achievements, the satisfaction of doing so, not in some smug way but in knowing you have made a difference of value. Of course you can. We have all felt like this at some time in our lives. We can remember how well we felt in doing so. The power of the human imagination is phenomenal.

So, ask yourself this: why do I not feel like this all of the time or a lot of the time? What can I do to begin the process of creating this feeling? If you have ever doubted the effect that one well intentioned, thoughtful, committed and purposeful person can have on the world, think again. *You* are capable of change and of changing the part of the world you inhabit.

Whether or not you are involved in the functional activity of branding does not matter. You are part of the brand of your organization. How you operate within it, what you say about it, what you believe about it, gets conveyed by you to its customers, shareholders and others.

You are also *brand you*. How you operate, how you treat your fellow workers and others reflects upon the brand of your organization. So, given this closeness of association and of potential alignment, if you care about your brand, and that of your organization, you can take action to go beyond the current limitations of deed and thought in how branding is practised, and take action to change it and the actions of others who influence it.

Please let us know (visit www.beyond-branding.com/contact.htm) about who you are and what you are doing to go well beyond branding. Share your experience with others who may be motivated to follow your example and build on what you are doing. •

It's **goodbye** to
the idea of **the**
third world
(we're not a nasty
multinational).

Didn't some of us say that once the economy improved, we'd follow up those initiatives to make the world a better place?

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In 2004, JY&A Consulting will create a new forum, in association with Earthspeak

Consultancy and *Brand New Justice*, where third-world entrepreneurs can get advice on branding—and raise their economies in the process.

It's one the steps we're taking to say goodbye to an economic structure that forgets the most important thing in corporations: people.

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