Brandscaping

Unleashing the Power of Partnerships

With Foreword By MarketingProfs’ Ann Handley

“Gamechanging”
–Steve Rotter, Marketing Vice President & Entrepreneur
Introduction

Brand/skāp-ing: A process that brings like-minded brands and their respective audiences together to create content that increases demand and drives revenue.

Should You Read This Book?

Look, if you want to raise awareness for your brand, buy advertising—lots of it. Buy banner ads, Facebook ads, and sponsored tweets. Buy Google Adwords and television commercials. Buy space in magazines and air time on the radio. But realize this: the space you buy isn’t permanent, and the time you buy is fleeting.

On the other hand, if you want to increase demand for your products, create content—lots of it. And not just any content, but great content. Great content shows people how your product or service can impact their lives. It gets people to buy your stuff more often—for the right reasons—and leave more satisfied. But creating great content—the right kind of content—isn’t easy. You’re going to need partners. You’re going to have to brandscape.

So, if you want to buy more advertising, don’t read this book. It’s a huge waste of time and your hard-earned money. There are too many great books out there about everything from developing effective advertising strategies to creating a successful campaign.

So, if you want to raise awareness, go buy ads. If you want to increase demand, this book is for you and it’s worth every penny.

A New Methodology

When I first started telling people I was writing a book called Brandscaping, I got a lot of blank stares. “Brandscaping?” I was asked. “What’s brandscaping?”

The simplest way I can put it, is that brandscaping is a new way of thinking. It’s more than a content marketing strategy or a social media initiative. It’s a marketing methodology that enables you to leverage content as an asset instead of treating it as an expense. This book is going
to show you how. There are plenty of examples out there of companies that are brandscaping quite successfully, and you’re going to learn about several of them right here.

Did you know that companies just like yours spend more than $8 billion a year on PR initiatives just so they can get some type of brief coverage about their products and services in a magazine, on a TV show, by a blogger or a newspaper reporter? Even worse, companies spend another $600 billion worldwide on advertising that is, for the most part, ignored.

What if you invested that money in creating content that consumers actually want to consume? On content that would solidify your relationship with the audience you already have and attract the new audiences you want? Content itself is an investment—it’s something you own, not something fleeting like a press mention or a TV commercial.

Brandscaping hinges on creating relevant, frequently delivered, compelling content that engages, inspires, and informs your audience—just like the media companies of old. Except, in a brandscaper’s world, you don’t have to rely on the media alone for access to your audience. You don’t have to rely on traditional journalists to write stories and magazines to publish them. You don’t need television and radio stations to produce shows, or professional photographers to shoot images. In a brandscaper’s world, you forge content relationships, pool your financial and media resources, and share your audience with those who have something to offer. In return, you get access to their audiences, too.

Ever thought of yourself as a talent scout or a media executive? Brandscaping turns you into one. It allows you to tap into trends, target multiple niches, and create movements. Brandscapers don’t focus on becoming publishers; they focus on letting others create content for their existing audiences.

Pooling resources—your audience, your expertise, and your money—with other brands that value the same prospects and customers makes your marketing dollars go further. In most cases, you can get more
content for the same amount you would spend on traditional advertising and PR and produce a greater return on investment.

Brandscape is the first marketing methodology to take advantage of monumental shifts in the media industry, social media, publishing, advertising, and PR. To be a successful brandscape, you have to understand the changes in the media landscape, buy-in to the value of editorially sound content, borrow the best content creation methods, leverage the power of your brand, and choose the best distribution tactics to better serve your audience. In the end, you’ll have a more loyal customer base, a higher-quality customer acquisition strategy, and a more powerful and successful sales engine—overall, a better brand.

To be a successful brandscape you need three things:

• The confidence to invest in the content of others and the belief that their audience, no matter how small, is valuable.
• The humility to believe that your customers care about more than just your products and services.
• The willingness to pool your resources and share your audience with other brands to make your marketing budget go farther.

You may not be willing to embrace these ideas right now, but by the end of the book you should be.

**From Taxi Dispatcher to Makeup Mogul**

Let me start by sharing one of my favorite examples of brandscape at work.

In 2007, Lauren Luke began selling make-up products on eBay in an effort to subsidize her income as a taxi dispatcher in Newcastle, England. To improve her sales, Lauren decided to start creating practical, makeup application videos on YouTube. Some of her most popular videos featured her step-by-step instructions on recreating celebrity looks.

For example, Lauren noticed the unique makeup stylings of Britney Spears in her music video for *Toxic*, so she created a tutorial video so fans could mimic the look at home. The 10-minute video isn’t over-produced, and as the *New York Times* pointed out, “with her plump
proportions and pretty if nondescript features, she seems an unlikely candidate to shake up the beauty world."

“There are no expensive edits. There’s no polish. People crave real. They don’t want spectacular effects and models,” Lauren says. Lauren’s content is unbelievably authentic and it works. Lauren’s Britney Spears video has over 1.6 million views and that’s not her most successful content to date. Some of her videos have been viewed more than 4 million times and, in total, her content has garnered over 111 million views. How many video views does Estee Lauder have on YouTube? Last time I checked, fewer than 150,000. Lauren’s content is 100 times more successful than one of the world’s largest beauty brands.

Lauren became a prolific YouTube content creator, posting at least one or two videos a week. In 2009, advertising agency Anomaly took note.

Essentially, Anomaly understood the power of the content Lauren had been creating and the audience she’d garnered. Instead of marketing her as a spokesperson for Estee Lauder or MAC, Anomaly partnered (and invested) in helping Lauren launch her own make-up line without a dollar of traditional advertising attached. As the partnership evolved, and in an effort to secure retail distribution for the new line of makeup called By Lauren Luke, the Anomaly team approached the make-up retail giant Sephora.

Before long, By Lauren Luke was on store shelves at Sephora, right down the aisle from beauty brands that spend hundreds-of-millions of dollars on traditional advertising and marketing. And it all started with a solid content strategy. Lauren’s insight and advice to an audience of women hoping to emulate a celebrity make-up look built up the demand for her own make-up line.

Lauren + Anomaly + Sephora = a brandscape

Lauren expanded her brandscape, almost continuously finding new opportunities to partner with others. In 2009, she released a line of printed books (yes, printed) titled Looks by Lauren Luke in a partnership with British publishing house Hodder & Stoughton. A month later, she debuted as an avatar in the Nintendo DS video game Supermodel Makeover By Lauren Luke.
Sephora, Nintendo, and even a traditional book publisher are leveraging Lauren’s simple content concept to increase demand for their respective products. Meanwhile, the books, the make-up line, the Nintendo game, and Lauren’s content all help sell each other’s products.

To take it a step further, Lauren leverages celebrity brands by customizing her content to appeal to niches within her core group. “If I do a video inspired by looks from the popular book series *Twilight*, I can grab hold of the *Twilight* audience. But if I do a Kelly Clarkson-inspired look, I can tap into a totally different audience,” Lauren explains.

Today, by her own estimation, the Lauren Luke brand is worth more than $100 million and it all started with focused, niche content on YouTube. This is what happens when you brandscape.

**Brandscaping: A Mall for Your Marketing**

Have you ever thought about why you like to shop at your favorite mall? Is it because all your favorite stores are there? Let me tell you a little secret: Every shopping center is an intentionally crafted brandscape designed to increase demand for all of the products and services sold there. That’s the power of brandscaping—working with others to increase demand for every partner’s product.

There’s a science behind shopping malls. You have to have the right tenant mix. You have to understand the market your mall will serve and the competition near by. You have to pick the right anchor tenants. You even have to understand how each tenant adds value to your shopper’s experience.

Brandscaping is no different. To be a successful brandscaper, you have to think more like a mall developer than a marketer, advertiser, or public relations person.

Anchor tenants define a mall’s success. Nordstrom’s, Sears, J.C. Penney, Target, Kmart, Costco, Home Depot, Walmart, and Bloomingdales are all very different brands. These brands set the tone for the mall experience. They attract specific types of consumers, as well as certain types of smaller tenants that are going after those specific types of consumers.
A mall anchored by Whole Foods might attract brands like Lulu Lemon, Nike, L.L. Bean, and restaurants such as P.F. Chang’s and The Cheesecake Factory, because they all target the same customer. On the other hand, a mall anchored by Kmart might attract brands like Bed, Bath & Beyond, Staples, and PetSmart, and restaurants such as Chuck E. Cheese and Panera.

The right kind of tenant mix means you attract the right kind of customers with the right frequency for the right reasons. The right tenant mix means your customers will stay longer and spend more. In fact, the success of any retail development hinges on every brand leveraging the success of every other store for their mutual gain. In essence, a rising tide lifts all ships.

Here’s how the science affects shopping behavior: I might visit Whole Foods every two weeks. If Whole Foods is next to L.L. Bean, I might stop there to buy a jacket. If I get hungry while I’m at L.L. Bean, I might walk over to The Cheesecake Factory for lunch. After lunch I might go to a movie, or stop in the Apple Store for an accessory. I might go into one of the gift shops to buy a birthday gift, or browse a sale at a boutique clothing store.

If Whole Foods was alone in a parking lot instead of a shopping center, I never would have gone to all these other stores. I would have gone home, unloaded my groceries and called it a chore. Instead, it was an experience. An experience where I spent more, stayed longer, and interacted with brands I hadn’t planned on visiting when I set out that morning.

The web is filled with billions of shopping malls, except these malls aren’t filled with products. They’re full of content. Content like Lauren Luke’s. Lauren’s content created an anchor tenant for millions of teenage girls looking for make-up advice. They visited her content every couple of weeks and before Lauren realized it, she’d garnered a loyal, high-quality audience that was valuable to other brands. Sephora, Nintendo, the book publisher and, of course, Lauren Luke’s make-up line are the other “stores” that round-out a consumer’s Lauren Luke experience. Lauren built a valuable little mall in the digital world.
Why You Need to Read this Book

Odds are you aren’t going to hear about the power of brandscaping from your ad agency or your PR firm. You certainly aren’t going to hear about it from your media partners or your trusty trade magazine. You aren’t going to learn about how to work with other brands or new talent from your digital agency who’s spending your cash on umpteen Google Adwords either.

None of these partners are going to help you build a portfolio of content creators that’s designed to drive sales with niche audiences for one simple reason: it undermines their existing business models.

How to Read this Book

There are millions of marketing how-to books on the market. This isn’t a how-to book. This is a how-to think book.

There are too many things to learn in a digital marketing landscape. You’re supposed to know how to use LinkedIn to drive business…how to build a successful blog…how to promote your products using Google Adwords…the list goes on and on. It’s overwhelming.

But you know what? You don’t have to learn any of those things. There are people you can hire who know that stuff. You can also leverage partners in your brandscape who already do these things better than you.

What you do need to learn is how to think about the digital landscape. You need to think about why you’re on LinkedIn (or Twitter, or YouTube, or Facebook). You need to think about what’s on your blog—or whether you should even have one. You need to figure out the best ways to introduce your products and services to new prospects and attract a bigger audience.

So while you’re reading this book, I want you to be thinking—not about how to push buttons, but about new ways of doing things…about ways you can partner with others to build a stronger brand.

Asking the Right Questions

This book is full of stories, case studies, and marketing lessons. But more importantly, it’s designed to help you ask the right questions.
Over the last decade, I’ve worked with hundreds of companies to help them build successful digital strategies and if I’ve learned one thing, it’s that most mistakes and missteps are **not** the result of implementing the wrong tactics—they’re the result of asking the wrong questions.

If you ask the wrong question, even when the answer’s right, you cannot be successful. It’s the difference between asking how to get from point A to point B instead of asking what’s the fastest way to get from point A to point B. You still might arrive, but you’ll quite possibly be late.

Every business is different. The tactics you implement should be different. Even your strategies will seem wildly different. However, the questions you should be asking are the same.

That’s why you’ll see sidebars in this book titled Ask Yourself. These questions are designed to challenge your marketing and sales teams. These are the questions that you need to keep reminding yourself of. The questions you should be asking your CEO and your business partners. The questions your employees, customers, clients, and even prospects can help answer. If you’re going to be successful in the digital world, you must consistently question every move.

**A Word About Video**

We live in a world where content can transcend media faster than ever before. Great blogs can become best-selling books. Best-selling books can become movies. YouTube video creators have become music icons like Justin Bieber. Ideas hatched on Twitter have become sitcoms. There’s a digital content continuum that enables successful content on one media to be translated to another at an ever-increasing pace.

Today, every single one of my clients wants a “video strategy.” They want to know how to get people to watch the content they create on Vimeo, LiveStream, or YouTube. I started out in television and film, so I’m comfortable building digital strategies that include video, and we’ve been successful doing that. However, the same strategies that build a successful YouTube audience can also be used to build a blog following, or a valuable audience of Facebook fans.

The point is, don’t fall into one of the most basic digital traps. Don’t
assume that because it works in one media or online channel it can’t work on another. This book is full of success stories that leverage video as a marketing and brandscaping strategy. But every one of these case studies could be executed as a podcast, a blog, or even a book. In the digital world, you must focus on using the right media for the right content delivered at the right time.

With every example in this book, I want you to constantly question the media being used. Ask yourself: if this wasn’t produced as video, could it work as a blog post, or start as a Tweet stream? Would this work as a podcast or a set of images?

**What If?**

I’m a believer in thinking big. The bigger you think, the stronger your vision and conviction. Too many marketers stop just short of a big success because they aren’t constantly asking themselves one simple question: What if?

That’s exactly what IBM has done numerous times and it’s come to define their brand.

IBM has long been respected as one of the most powerful business solutions providers in the marketplace. Sure, they’ve done tons of traditional advertising, but IBM also has a track record of embracing brandscaping, even before the age of social media and the web revolution.

In 1997, IBM had spent six years working to build a computer that could beat a world-champion chess player. IBM’s efforts paid off when Deep Blue, its chess-playing computer, beat famed chess player Gary Kasparov. Immediately, IBM had positioned itself as a problem-solver, able to tackle even the most complex problems and succeed.

In addition, the game of chess and even Gary Kasparov were propelled into the national spotlight. Essentially, IBM enlisted the brands of Gary Kasparov, the game of chess, and the clever concept of an insurmountable brand challenge to create some of the most compelling content in modern public relations history. The message: if you have a business challenge to solve, IBM will do it.
IBM had asked one simple question: What if a computer could beat a human at chess?

In 2011, IBM did it again, except this time they partnered with the game show *Jeopardy*.

It all started in 2004 when a team of IBM employees, led by IBM researcher Charles Lickel, set out to build a machine that could beat Ken Jennings, who had won the most *Jeopardy* games in the show’s history.

IBM documented the entire process on video. They videotaped the failures, the small successes, and even the practice rounds where their computer answered *Jeopardy* questions with answers that showed how complicated the logic was. IBM named the computer Watson.

On Valentine’s Day 2011, Watson took the stage to compete for two consecutive nights against Ken Jennings and Brad Butler, another highly successful *Jeopardy* contestant.

On the first night, *Jeopardy*’s ratings skyrocketed to 14.5 million viewers, 24 percent higher than the same day a year before. By the second night, given all the media coverage and online buzz leading into the evening’s show, *Jeopardy* outperformed every show on TV in the top 10 television markets. Over the course of two days, more than 30 million viewers tuned-in to watch Watson take the *Jeopardy Challenge* and win!

But *Jeopardy* wasn’t the only one with positive results to tout.

IBM, in its quarterly earnings report, attributed the 20 percent growth in its analytics business for the quarter to the remarkable success of Watson on *Jeopardy*. Even IBM’s chief financial officer, Mark Loughridge, described Watson’s triumph as a calculated marketing move designed to drive revenue. “We didn’t invest just to play *Jeopardy*, we invested to prove leadership applications for our clients.”

In a media marketplace dominated by brands like Apple, Google, and Facebook, IBM proved once again that it was one of the most innovative technology players in the marketplace.

IBM had asked one more simple question: What if a computer could beat a human at *Jeopardy*?
Good marketers and great brandscapers are always asking “What if?” What if we thought a little bigger? What if we made one more strategic connection? What if we took one more step, did one more thing, had one more conversation?

Every chapter in Brandscaping includes a section called “What if.” These sections are designed to help you explore the additional untapped opportunities for the case studies in this book.

It wasn’t easy for IBM to build Watson. But they documented every misstep. Those missteps and challenges turned into a PBS special on NOVA called “The Smartest Machine on Earth” (another brandscape). Those missteps showed how IBM thinks. How they solve problems. How they succeed, no matter how big the challenge.

As a business professional, asking yourself “What if?” will challenge your team to rise to the challenge, to rally around a big idea. A big idea that has the power to transform your business, even your industry.