

# Creative B2B Branding (no, really)

Scot McKee

<b>9</b>	<b>Bear witness</b>	
	Context	2
	Software Inc.	4
	<b>Epilogue</b>	<b>17</b>
	Mamma take this badge off of me	17
	The King is dead – long live the King	17
	Repent ye sinners and believe	18
	The whole truth, and nothing but the truth	18
	A view from the bridge	20
	<b>The Beginning</b>	<b>22</b>

**(G)** Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ  
<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

Copyright © Scot McKee 2010

All rights reserved by Goodfellow Publishers Limited. The text of this publication, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, storage in an information retrieval system, or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.



Design and setting by P.K. McBride

---

# 9 Bear witness

- ▶ An interview
- ▶ A 'case study'
- ▶ An independent perspective



## Context

In my career as 'brand builder' the recurring obstacle I encounter within the B2B community is aversion to creative risk. I encounter many other obstacles of course – time, money, inexperience, personality conflicts, market dynamics – but the one that frustrates the most is the aversion to creative risk, not least because in all my experience, I have found the risk to be rooted in the mind and not in the market.

Traditional 'case studies' do little to alleviate the problem. The traditional format of, 'The Brief, The Challenge, The Solution, The Results', no matter how compelling, can be served up repeatedly and may, on occasion, treat the symptoms of the client's fear. But they never treat the cause. The cause is personal and/or organizational

inertia. The inability to achieve velocity for the brand by propelling it forward creatively. It's easier and safer to move in very slow, very small increments and protect the existing brand equity, if any exists. Ease and safety are the anathemas of creative brand building.

Rather than offer a series of case studies to support the text, I therefore wanted to tell you a story – it's a recurring theme with brands. The story was to be about a B2B brand that overcame its fear, embraced creative change and lived happily ever after. But however I constructed the story in my mind, the compelling reasons for change would be lost because they were always going to be based on my (subjective) opinion.

So instead, in an attempt to break with tradition, offer an objective perspective on the themes of this text and to perhaps inspire a more concerted effort by others to achieve brand velocity, I contacted the client who was to be the subject of my story (five years after the event) and asked her if she would help me tell the story. She said, 'Yes.'

Unfortunately, the company that she worked for at that time said 'No.' I submitted the draft text of this chapter to the company for its comments in the hope that it might offer a reminder of past glories. Apparently not. The response was, 'Following initial feedback from colleagues I have been advised that we are unable to grant permission for the publication of this element.' Which was nice, but I hadn't asked for permission. Did Jonathan Swift ask for permission? Did Karl Marx ask for permission? Did Fluck & Law ask for permission? No, they didn't.

If it ever had a chance of survival in the first place, the bureaucracy and inflexibility endemic in large corporate enterprises kills brand creativity. Say 'no' first, ask questions later. There's certainly a place for protecting brand equity – brand value is important – but saying no because harm will otherwise be done to a brand is different to saying no irrespective of context and content 'just in case'. When corporate brands realize the difference between brand oppression and brand opportunity we may start to achieve the creative change central to this text.

In our digital, 'social' democracy, we let the people talk. They're going to do it anyway. The opportunity for the brand is to actively engage in the conversation instead of trying to prevent it. The alternative is a corporate dictatorship. Which brand is most likely to appeal to and

**Chapter extract**

**To buy the full file, and for copyright  
information, click here**

[http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com/academic-publishing.php?promoCode=&partnerID=&content=story&st](http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com/academic-publishing.php?promoCode=&partnerID=&content=story&storyID=233)

[oryID=233](http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com/academic-publishing.php?promoCode=&partnerID=&content=story&storyID=233)



All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise, without the written permission of Goodfellow Publishers Ltd

All requests should be sent in the first instance to

[rights@goodfellowpublishers.com](mailto:rights@goodfellowpublishers.com)

[www.goodfellowpublishers.com](http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com)