


# Creative B2B Branding (no, really)

Scot McKee

## 2 It's just a badge, isn't it? (logo v brand)

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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# 2 It's just a badge, isn't it? (logo v brand)

- ▶ Understanding the power of a business brand
- ▶ Understanding the limitations of a business brand
- ▶ Beginning to build a brand experience

## Bend me, shape me, any way you want me

It was all so easy back when I was less legendary than I like to think of myself today. When I was growing up in 'the olden days', as my daughter likes to call the halcyon days of my youth, we apparently didn't have lights or toilets or taps or indeed, chocolate buttons. We sure as hell didn't have 'brands'. At least, not in the same way we have them today.

A '[brand](#)' is perhaps best recognized from those olden days as something that was burned onto a cow's rear end. Not that you'd get much in the way of thanks from the cow of course – and who could blame it? How would you feel if you received the same treatment with a hot branding iron? The branded mark burnt into the hide identified the cattle as the property of the farmer and cattle rustlers were duly strung up if they were caught smothering hickory smoked sauce on anything other than their own baby back ribs. This process of marking property has continued down the years and is still very much a visible part of everyday life.

Before cattle were branded, 'human cattle', slaves in other words, were [branded by the Romans](#) and then shipped off to auction. It was a mark they fought hard in amphitheatres to earn the right to have removed. Easier said than done, because once the brand had been

burned into the skin, it was almost impossible to remove entirely – a metaphoric lesson we would all do well to remember when the next bright spark utters the words, ‘I know, let’s re-brand!’ More recently, [slaves](#) in the southern states of America were branded by their masters as a mark of ownership to ensure that they would be returned if caught attempting to escape. [African tribes](#) continue to mark their skin permanently and voluntarily in a variety of different ways to visibly demonstrate allegiance to a village, a tribe, a king or even a God. Marking ourselves to demonstrate allegiances, even in the Western World, is also prevalent.

Modern human ‘branding’ takes the form of body art, tattooing and even [body piercing](#). In the context of marketing and brand strategy, it’s not uncommon for brand advocates to have the logo of their chosen affections tattooed onto their skin. Phil Knight, founder of [Nike](#) has famously had the Nike ‘[swoosh](#)’ tattooed on his calf – as have many other athletes and employees who associate themselves with the Nike brand. The Nike swoosh is considered by many (anecdotally rather than through empirical evidence) to be the most popular of all corporate brand tattoos – of which there are an increasing number.

When considering the importance of a business brand it’s therefore worth remembering the significant position that brands have in the eyes of their supporters. Brands have become sufficiently influential in the minds of their audiences to warrant a tattoo of the logo to be needle and inked into their skin – painfully and permanently. Call me old fashioned, but that’s got to hurt? Right? You would have to be fairly committed to do that. In the B2B world we’re perhaps a little less gushing in our praise for the brand we associate ourselves with. If you really wanted to impress, you might work late at the office in order to achieve results. But strip down, bare a cheek and have the company logo drilled into your rear end? Really? Personally, I’ll wear the T-shirt. I’ll happily use the branded pens. But my ass is off limits.

Demonstrating a fervent display of tattooed affection towards a business brand is less prevalent than the consumer brand tattoos that we see more regularly. If you ride a [Harley Davidson](#) motorcycle and you’re inclined to show the world your big, fat, hairy, handlebar mustachioed affiliation, you might well roll up a sleeve or drop your drawers to show how much your [Fat Boy](#) really means to you. In business, we’re less inclined to take our work home with us on our

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