

Using Your Heritage to Differentiate Your Brand



*By Bruce Weindruch, Founder and CEO,
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As Founder and CEO of The History Factory, one of the most important lessons I've learned over 37 years in business is that heritage is the common fulcrum upon which many of the world's greatest brands pivot. Consider Apple's iconic "[Think Different](#)" campaign, launched in 1997 shortly after Steve Jobs rejoined the company. At that time, Apple reportedly had just 90 days of operating cash left and its future was in serious doubt. The oft-cited campaign turned out to be one of the most critical milestones in the company's history and has become part of Apple's mythology, a story that continues to resonate today at a company whose value has grown to nearly \$600 billion.

At [The History Factory](#), we've encountered many such stories – in which a specific individual or strategic decision at a certain point in time plays a massive role in shaping a company's culture, value proposition and [brand](#) for years to come. By helping to identify, capture and leverage these distinct corporate memories through what we call Heritage Management, we help companies address current challenges and achieve future goals.

Experience shows that companies that embrace history as a mechanism to chronicle their story are often the same ones cited as among the world's leading innovators, greatest places

to work, environmental stewards, value creators and most valuable brands. In working with them, we apply tools commonly seen in world-class literature, theatrical production or film to tell their heritage stories about the fascinating people who played critical roles in creating and building the organizations we recognize today.

How Heritage Management gets applied for each company is unique. It can range from anniversary books or milestone events to historical exhibits. It can appear in product development, advertising campaigns, customer loyalty initiatives, training, brand building and employee engagement campaigns. It can help bolster slumping morale during a period of business challenge, help re-engage customers with a brand, or smooth tensions created by a complex merger of companies with highly distinct or competitive cultures.

The fact is that the best corporate heritage programs can do all of the above, especially if compelling storytelling is at the heart of the process. But in order to extract maximum value from history, you have to be purposeful in crafting stories you're telling. You have to think like a marksman: Identify a target. Figure out what you want to hit, and how you're going to hit it. And then strike the bull's-eye. That's our methodology at The History Factory – "Start With the Future and Work Back."

By truly knowing about the history of your company, you can help build your organization and its brand stronger in the future. Whether we acknowledge it or not, heritage is deeply ingrained in the culture and brand of most organizations. We just have to identify it, preserve it and continually make it relevant and accessible to maximize its inherent value to the enterprise.

About the Author: Bruce Weindruch, The History Factory's founder and CEO, is the author of Start with the Future and

Work Back: A Heritage Management Manifesto, available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. His unique background, blending history and business, has given him the expertise to help major corporations, nonprofit organizations and associations use their organizational heritage to benefit their bottom line.