

refine that brand.

As someone in business, I have always had the greatest admiration for Gerry Harvey and his Harvey Norman brand. There's no doubt that Mr Harvey is looked upon as one of the country's leading businessmen. His thoughts, however, on corporate philanthropy... not so delightful.

Gerry Harvey and Ian Norman opened in 1961, which specialised in electrical goods and appliances... namely Norman Ross. Great focus, and I guess that's what made it a target of a respectable acquisition back in the early 80's.

After buyouts, sackings and the like, in October 1982, Harvey and Norman purchased a new shopping centre in the outer Sydney suburb of Auburn for \$3 million, and opened store. It was intended to be a single store but its success led to the opening of many more. Harvey Norman Holdings Limited was listed on the Australian stock market on 3 September 1987.

In the early 1990's Harvey Norman adopted the superstore format that was then successful in the United States and entered the computer and furniture markets. Harvey Norman growth came organically until it acquired Joyce Mayne in 1998. Further acquisitions followed and by the year 2000 the chain had 100 stores.

The company's structure is unique in that each store department (bedding, and electrical) is operated by a separate franchisee.

So what does this all mean for the Harvey Norman brand? What does Harvey Norman STAND for? If you were to put in a short sentence describing

what the Harvey Norman difference and focus was, what would it be? A retail store that sells furniture, bedding, electrical, computers, the focus? What category does Harvey Norman belong to in the minds of consumers? As they profess, they are 'your specialist in electrical, computers, furniture and bedding'. They forgot Specialists of everything?? Oxymoron?

And before you say that their Interest Free Terms are the point of difference, they're not...anyone can replicate that. Interest Free Terms are being offered by plenty of retailers.

If I think furniture, I think Domayne (which is owned by Harvey Norman Holdings Limited), Freedom Furniture or Fantastic Furniture. If I think electrical, I think JB HiFi or Dick Smith – talk to the techxperts. If I think bedding, I think Forty Winks or Snooze. How about sofas? Push – think Sofas. Now that's a specialty store right there.

There are plenty of small businesses that get their brand focused, they just don't tell too many people about it. House of Bamboo - specialists in bamboo materials for your house. Great one.

How about the ones that don't do it right? Lets take 'Designer Image Robes' - a real company. What do they do? Evening Robes? Regal Robes? Formal Robes? Japanese Robes? No, they make custom furniture, glass doors, storage units and wardrobes. Of course they do. Almost as bad as the "Hollywood" brand. Hollywood Fashion Tape - so popular amongst women. Well, they now brought out Hollywood Stain Remover Pen.

Bad move, give it another name. 'Hollywood' stands for 'Fashion Tape' in the mind, not a pen.

Your brand needs to stand for something in the mind of your potential customers and clients. People can only retain so much information at once, so make it easy for them to remember you and what you do.

Get that positioning ready and right for 2011 so that it's easier to communicate what you and your brand do, and what makes you different to the next competitor.

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a quick one on... defining your brand

- Spending time to define what you do has a number of important implications
- It will make your communication more targeted and effective in the future positioning
- This definition and point of difference should be defined in a positioning
- This positioning should be visually and verbally communicated by you and your team
- Creating this positioning understand what you do differently to the competition
- It allows your brand to be focused and makes it easier to communicate what you do
- Take a day to dig deep into difference - get an expert to help you do this if need be

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