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AS FEATURED IN



Authority Magazine



Bryan Smeltzer is a successful consumer products business executive and entrepreneur. He has held key executive-level roles in global business development, product creation, marketing, and sales with some of the world's most iconic brands, including; Oakley, K-Swiss, TaylorMade, Adidas, Schutt Sports, among several other international brands.

As an entrepreneur, Bryan also founded a premium apparel brand, successfully running a profitable business for ten years, eventually selling to a Venture Capital firm.

He currently oversees LiquidMind Inc., a global brand strategy firm that partners with both start-ups and established brands to empower businesses to think different, be different, drive a passionate culture and execute relentlessly.





LIQUIDMIND

BRYAN IS CURRENTLY PRESIDENT OF LIQUIDMIND INC., A GLOBAL BRAND STRATEGY FIRM LOCATED IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

LiquidMind Inc. partners with globally recognized brands, along with start-ups within consumer goods, footwear and apparel categories. These iconic brands include:



SKINS
DISTRIBUTION

ARENA
DISTRIBUTION

LIQUIDMIND INC.

LiquidMindsite.com

With extensive executive level functional expertise, LiquidMind Inc. provides strategic support across;

Global Business Development
Go to Market Plan & Execution
International Distribution
Financial Management

Venture Capital/Private Equity
Strategic Marketing Programs
Product Creation Platform

LiquidMind provides specific, targeted support and partners with our brands to fit into their immediate and long-term needs.

THE VISIONARY CHRONICLES



BRYAN IS THE CREATOR OF THE VISIONARY CHRONICLES A PODCAST FOCUSED ON CREATING SUCCESSFUL AND THRIVING BRANDS.

***“I am always
passionate
for defining
& leading the
next industry
revolution...”***

– Bryan Smeltzer



The Visionary Chronicles provides ongoing insight into driving brand strategy, implementing disruptive product creation, a unique take on areas Brands often overlook, along with interviews with industry Leaders and Visionaries.

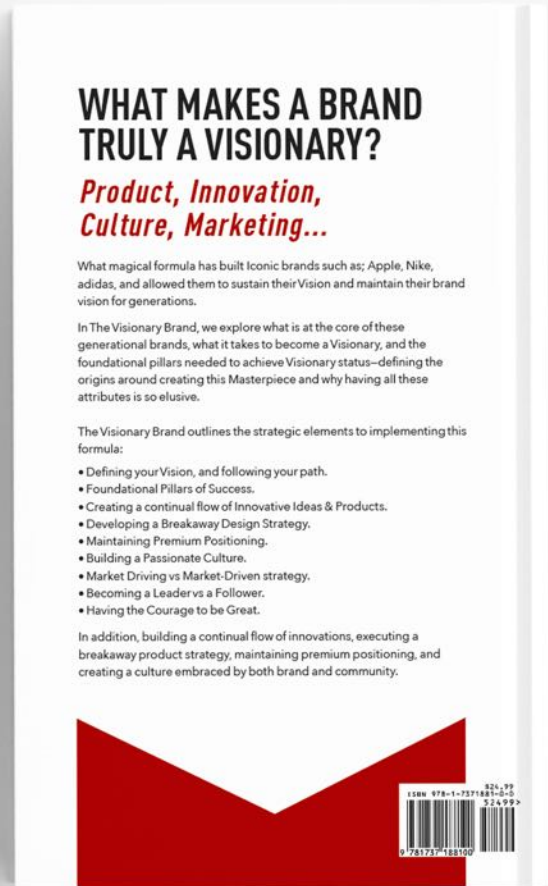
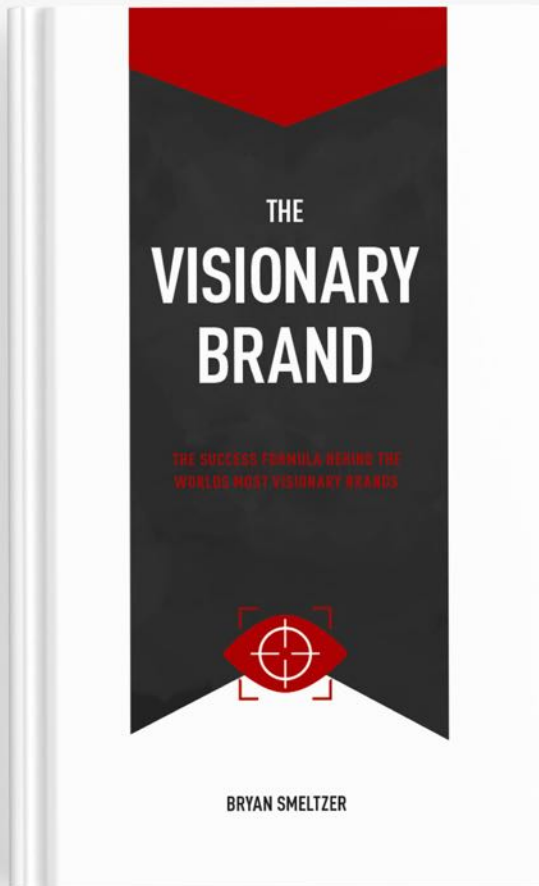




THE VISIONARY BRAND

BRYAN IS THE AUTHOR OF THE VISIONARY BRAND

The Visionary Brand is for those who aspire to greatness and have a vision for what the future should be, this book is for you.



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EMBRACE YOUR VISION. COMMIT TO BEING DIFFERENT. INSPIRE OTHERS.

ASPIRE TO BE A VISIONARY!



THE VISIONARY BRAND

INTRO SECTION



INTRODUCTION

Oakley had a problem.

Over the previous decades, it had established itself as a titan in the world of eyewear thanks to its tenacious, take-no-prisoners culture. It was everything a brand aspires to be: it pushed the boundaries of the industry, setting the pace and letting its competitors try to play catch-up, all supported by a dedicated community of brand ambassadors who were only too happy to be part of the aspirational, active Oakley lifestyle.

But there was just one problem: their community went wild for their culture and design, but there were several related product categories that were going untapped. While Oakley eyewear was a study in breakthrough products that drove the market, the apparel, footwear and accessories (AFA) product line extensions were not part of the brand's portfolio. The company was sure they could take on other action sports

brands and build a successful business where one did not exist today. Quiksilver and Billabong, among other action sports brands, were taking the lion's share of those markets. Oakley said, "We can do that, too!"

A plan was put in place, and the categories were launched. The product teams were given the go-ahead to launch a whole new line of Oakley-branded AFA products. The eyewear division would keep doing what they were doing so well, and the AFA teams would get the resources needed to build the brand bigger than ever. In short order, Oakley was ready to begin a new chapter in their dominance of these new market opportunities.

And that's when Oakley's little problem became a much bigger problem—one that would alienate some of their core community and drive the entire brand culture in a different direction. Both category authenticity and channel distribution would quickly become problems whereas they hadn't been before. Oakley began to lose its cultural direction, as well as those loyal brand ambassadors who stuck with the brand through its evolution over the decades. They had loved and embraced the brand for what it was, not what it was becoming.

In the end, Oakley was more fortunate than most brands that go down a similar road—trying to be something they are not. After making the decision to dedicate themselves to creating what was right for the brand and aligning with their brand identity, they were able to regain their customers' trust and brand equity, and were finally able to climb their way back

to the top of their core product categories.

Most brands don't get a second chance like that—Oakley was only able to manage it because the visionaries steering the brand had the courage to reflect on what had happened so they could learn from what did not work and get back to what did work—doing what is right for the brand and their loyal customers.

Even global, iconic brands can end up losing sight of their cultural bloodlines if they are not committed to the foundational pillars on which their brands were built. No matter how solid the product, marketing, and sales—no matter how powerful your formula for success—without a singular guiding vision at the helm determining what is right for the brand, what will drive it forward into the next generation?

In other words, Oakley learned early on what it takes to be a truly visionary brand as opposed to one that loses its way.

BECOMING VISIONARY

Over my nearly three decades in business—from founding my own company to successfully selling it to being involved in executive-level roles with some of the world's most iconic brands—I have come across brands that have visionary qualities. But ultimately, none have had all that is required to achieve authentic visionary brand status. Somewhere in the brand, something is almost always missing. Even brands like Under Armour and Oakley—ones that build themselves

up to the top of their industry—can lose sight of their future when they abandon the principles that made them great in the first place. Ultimately, no matter how strong a brand may be in a dozen different capacities, all things considered, it is an incredibly difficult task to achieve and sustain a visionary brand.

When asked about what makes a brand *visionary*, most people will come up with three or four common traits associated with a brand:

Product

Marketing

Culture

Innovation

These are good starting points, but each on its own does not make for a visionary brand, nor do all four put together. To achieve visionary status, you must not only have these core qualities, but all must be built in as an integral part of your brand's foundation. That foundation needs to be structurally upheld by foundational pillars that support your vision in every aspect of the brand's actions—both internally and with the world at large.

Throughout my years, I have always been curious as to what makes a genuinely visionary brand. There are qualities like the four mentioned above, but in reality, it takes the vertical integration of many different pieces to make a brand

run on all cylinders effectively. You may have a Lamborghini that looks fast, but if you are only running on six cylinders, you are missing out on its full potential. And so it goes with brands; some are six cylinders, some eight . . . but I have yet to see one that runs on all twelve over the long haul.

That's not to say becoming a visionary brand is impossible—however, it is a continual struggle to establish and live up to the pillars your brand was founded on. Above all else, being visionary involves touching, impacting, and energizing all aspects of your company—all the bloodlines that flow through the veins of a living, breathing organ called a brand.

As the leader of a brand, you're essentially acting as an orchestra conductor: you're not just leading individuals with different talents in their independent tasks, but synthesizing their talents and efforts toward the singular goal of collectively making music as a unit. Depending on your actions and your vision, the result can be either harmonious or disastrous.

At the end of the day, it is your responsibility to ensure each player in the orchestra is correctly prepared, synchronized, and in harmony with one another. How you lead the ensemble can be translated to a brand's eventual success. Where there is a common goal, along with preparation and coordination, beautiful things happen at all levels. Although challenging, having a shared vision—led from the top down and anchored in guiding and values-driven principles—ensures everyone involved will be committed to achieving success.

Or to employ another metaphor: I often refer to those

visionaries who have been able to achieve this brand status as “five-star generals.” They are few in number, and each has successfully led their teams into battles and achieved many victories. Obviously, leading a brand is not the same as going to war, but this gives you some idea of the kind of difficulties you will encounter as you move through the different stages of brand development. You will face choices that test your foundational, visionary principles, ones that will affect the future of your brand. As a result of your choices, your brand will continue to grow and develop . . . or it will deteriorate before the eyes of your team and your supporters.

Understanding the growth of a brand is a trait not easily discovered, which is why so few true visionaries exist. I have found that brands that have sustained growth—not just revenue, but also brand equity—tend to have this trait in common. Brands that have nurtured the soul of their company are the ones that provide value in the eyes of the consumer. This value may be realized through the products a brand sells, and likewise through the brand’s culture or the aspirational lifestyle they market to their community. Each delivers a different loyalty curve or experience to that brand advocate.

The key to building a lasting brand truly is loyalty. We live in a world where loyalty is considered one of the inherent values of every company; betray that trust to your stakeholders or your customers and you lose their loyalty. Betray your foundational visionary principles of the brand and you lose loyalty. Remember, selling a brand means selling a lifestyle you

can touch and feel, and when trust is damaged, it is challenging to repair.

But where does this loyalty come from? Ultimately, loyalty is traced back to the **visionary**—the one who sets the foundational pillars and principles of the brand and what the brand stands for across all areas of its existence—be it product, messaging, or culture. Each of these three areas carries the torch of the brand vision, and they are all integral parts of defining its future.

My main purpose in writing this book is to break down how to achieve and maintain visionary status as a brand and what this looks like in real life. It's important to know that a truly, fully visionary brand is an incredibly rare thing. Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller—each of these individuals was a truly visionary leader, and their brands broke barriers and revolutionized their respective industries. Yet each of their brands also missed at least one piece of the puzzle. Some grew complacent in their success and allowed their brand to be overtaken by competitors; others may have had revolutionary products, but lacked the human touch to carry their discoveries into the lives of their customers. This is a real lesson for anyone with the desire to build a visionary brand: it is an ongoing journey, one that doesn't stop no matter what level of market success is achieved.

Through my research and real-life experiences with iconic brands, I found I have been able to piece together the formula

of what constitutes a true, all-cylinders-firing visionary brand. I've included plenty of examples of brands that are running on most cylinders, and a few that drive with much less—both of which are great examples of what to do and what not to do. Most of all, in this book I lay out foundational principles shared by brands that have successfully navigated the barriers to long-term success put in front of them.

Through my decades of direct experience with these brands, along with the hard knocks and success I encountered along the way, I hope you will find *The Visionary Brand* either inspires you in building your brand or reinvigorates a passion inside of you to realign your goals for you and your team. This is not a goal for the faint of heart; the journey will take courage, trust, and commitment to your foundation pillars to ensure your success. Yet ultimately, everyone has the ability to achieve visionary status. Those who succeed persevere; those who fail compromise.

Fear is the opposite of courage, and those who succeed choose courage—the courage to stand when others fall. If you have the courage to stick to your guns and create, build, and grow your brand while sticking to your pillars of success . . . then read on, visionary!



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