

Collaborative brand building: Striving towards higher goals

 By [Carla Enslin](#)

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It may not be a stunning revelation that for humanity, the need to compete is regarded as natural - but only as natural as the need to cooperate. These two driving forces and the interaction between them are central to human nature and as certainly of brand nature.



Platform6 team of teachers and trainers

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While the competitive nature of strategic brand building is easily acknowledged, the cooperative need may not be. Strategic brand building is primarily practiced on two levels. A brand sets goals and defines itself by competitive frameworks. When the competitive landscape and its conditions are understood, a brand can draft clear and accountable goals and define the territory it aims to conquer. However, goal setting is not particularly useful if not properly contextualised and motivated. The question is, to what end do we aim to compete and achieve identified targets?

Commitment to a clear purpose

The competitive nature of strategy requires commitment to a clear purpose that is unique and adds value to peoples' lives. This applies to any brand, whether it is a retail organisation, social movement or a country brand.

Goals and targets serve a particular purpose, which is how brand and business strategy finds alignment and competing makes sense. One important consequence of serving purpose, but not the sole reason, is deriving profits. As Kellogg once argued, "the purpose of business is to add value to people's lives. The consequence of doing that well is that you make a handsome profit".

It is perhaps trite to state that competition plays an important role in defining a brand's identity. Yet, a brand is known by its competition. Competitors, by comparison, highlight a brand's uniqueness and the extent to which its position in the category

matters. A healthy brand orientation would therefore show respect and admiration for the positioning and reputation of key competitors.

So, while there can be significant value to a healthy competitive orientation in brand building, a cooperative or collaborative approach is as valuable in order to reach higher order goals such as category and social development ideals. Strategic brand building will then involve collaboration with respected competitors to co-design and implement initiatives that serve the best interests of the category, its stakeholders and resources. Collaboration with respected competitors is fueled and energised by the benefits of working together.

Benefitting from collaborative initiatives

World Design Capital Cape Town 2014 is a shining beacon and host to several such category collaborations. If for no other reason, it should receive national attention and support. Once successfully implemented, not only the Western Cape, but also our country as a whole, will benefit from these various collaborative initiatives that aim to bridge economic divides, connect communities and proudly position African innovation locally and globally.

Among the many exciting initiatives, one particular project that is a collaboration among competitors toward category and country goals is called Platform 6. This is a training programme to better equip high school design teachers to engage learners in the purpose and practice of design.

Promoting the critical role of design

Design develops original and meaningful solutions to all kinds of challenges, to create better experiences and to move the world forward. It is an important school subject and its potential and impact is determined by the mindset, passion and expertise of its educators. Platform 6 is investing in South Africa's future designers by working closely with their role models and teachers. Importantly, this official World Design Capital project is a unique collaboration between a collective of tertiary design schools in Cape Town. The schools involved are all direct competitors to one another and annually compete for talent, intake and industry awards. However, the mutual goal to promote the critical role of design, its importance as a school subject, the potential of future design talent and the contribution that the category of design schools make in this regard, presented a compelling and shared motivation.

Joint purpose is a powerful tool. Through its collective nature, it has the potential to attract additional parties and investors who share the vision. The united interest of the tertiary design schools has thus attracted the support of key industry and society stakeholders, among others the Brand Council of South Africa and the Western Cape Department of Education.

The legacy of Platform 6 will hopefully become evident from the high levels of collaboration and commitment between the tertiary design schools and the enthusiastic acceptance of young designers at high school level. The ultimate endowment will lie in the contribution to building strong and innovative industries and societies made by South Africa's future designers and leaders.

Unite competitors in a shared purpose

A healthy collaborative orientation in brand building can produce unexpected alliances and unite competitors in a shared purpose. Such collaborations have the potential to build category reputation and highlight individual brand uniqueness while making a decisive and meaningful contribution to the health and future well being of all involved in this promising venture.

Platform 6 includes: AAA School of Advertising, Red&Yellow, The IIE's Vega School of Brand Leadership, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town Creative Academy, Stellenbosch Academy, Friends of Design, Montebello Labs, Ruth Prowse, Ubuntu Academy, RockCityFoundation and the Western Cape Department of Education.

Dr Carla Enslin is one of the founding members of Vega School of Brand Leadership. She is Academic Head at The Independent Institute of Education's Vega School of Brand Leadership, a Teaching Fellow at UCT's Graduate School of Business, and deputy chair of the Brand Council of South Africa (BCSA).

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