

# Legacy is only a relevant brand message if you're still relevant

 By [Jennilee Peremore-Oliver](#)

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For decades, marketers have used legacy to persuade the public to buy their product or service. Messages like, "serving our community for 200 years" or "delivering quality since 1905." Legacy messages can be compelling if your company has continued to live up to the legacy left by the company's predecessors, and it can be genuinely compelling if stakeholders continue to vouch for the trustworthiness of the company and the brand today.



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## Consumers are savvy marketers

Consumers are becoming savvy marketers themselves. With the rise of personal branding, customers have become experts at marketing themselves through their social media posts, fashion, the places they go, and the people with whom they associate. This heightened awareness among people, in general, about personal branding, has prompted more people to develop a more in-depth understanding of marketing as they develop their own advertising campaigns to promote their personal brands.

Therefore, consumers understand how marketers use brand messages to influence the customer's choice in favour of their products and services. It's not as simple anymore for marketers to come up with a good tagline for their brand awareness campaign because the new savvy consumer wants proof that the legacy they are promoting is still relevant and in practice today.



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Whatever your legacy promise is, whether it be caring for the community or delivering excellent service for 200 years— you need to prove that your company still cares about the greater good, and you need to have customers, clients, and employees that still vouch that your product or service is excellent. Without this social proof, legacy messages are irrelevant.

## **Age is nothing but a number**

So much has changed since 2020. Companies that struggled decades to transform digitally took major transformation leaps overnight in the first quarter of 2020, proving that maintaining the status quo was merely due to a resistance to change, and not due to any other encumbrance. There are two critical takeaways for businesses from the pandemic; one – a lot can change overnight, and two, it's not necessarily the companies who have been in the game the longest who will succeed.

There are young companies who are innovating and producing products and services better than older companies. These small companies are in tune with the needs people have today and have developed unique ways to address those needs. Consumers want to know how your product and service will help them today with the challenges they face today. Customers want quick, easy, and convenient products and services, and unless your company innovates to keep up with the times, you'll be left behind.

## **History makes for a great story, but what are you doing today that's great?**

Your consumer won't care that you're 100 years old and that three decades ago you had an innovation that addressed the needs of that time if you're not addressing the needs they have today. Saying, "trust me, because I'm old," will no longer cut it.

History reminds us of where we come from; it's a guidepost or benchmark ensuring that we don't steer too far off course – it helps ensure that we hold true to the values lived by the heroes in our company story. History is powerful, and as South Africans, we know better than anyone else how powerful history can be. It can be a guiding light for a company and its stakeholders during difficult times, but every new decade and every new challenge requires a different kind of hero.

The heroes in your company story from decades back may not be able to take on the unique challenges of 2022. When you market your legacy message, be sure to show how you are continuing to live those values to date. And it won't be enough to say you're living those values; you must prove you're living it.

Your customers, employees, and other stakeholders must all vouch for your integrity.

## **Conclusion**

Speaking too much about legacy and not marketing your company's current performance could create the perception that there isn't much innovation happening now in the company.

Striking a balance between marketing a company's history and marketing its contemporary innovations will keep customers reassured that your brand is moving forward and that it's not stuck in its good old glory days.

Now that legacy is less relevant to consumers than contemporary innovation, new entrants who can meet consumer demands quickly and conveniently have a window of opportunity to persuade customers to purchase from them based on

current and proven rather than known and trusted.

The only thing holding back new entrants is capital, and that's why the legacy brand can take their sweet time to innovate and transform digitally because few have the financial power to overtake them. If it's only money protecting legacy brands, well then that surely is a rather thin layer of protection.

## ABOUT JENNILEE PEREMORE-OLIVER

Jennilee Peremore-Oliver is an award-winning media and communications professional, who started her career in 2009. In 2017 she founded the Communications Agency, Jenniemore (Pty) Ltd. She has worked with brands in the corporate, media and non-profit sectors.

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