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***Brand-Aids™** are practical, easy-to-use tools you can apply to brand building and messaging through ads, PR, literature, websites, and so forth. Just like Band-Aids® stop the bleeding from annoying cuts, Brand-Aids stop the pain and cost of branding confusion.*

## Brand-Aids #7— Build a better brand? Better have good architecture.

*By John Favalo, CBC, Managing Partner  
Eric Mower and Associates, Group B2B*

Just yesterday I did an interview with a reporter from a trade magazine. She asked me, “Can you explain for our readers what a brand is?” I responded, “How many pages can you give me?”

Her “brand question” is like asking someone to explain the meaning of life. It’s complex, multi-layered, and a matter of perspective. It’s rational and emotional. Technical and human.

The real point of a brand though is not in the definition, it’s in the value that can be accessed and delivered, and the associated experience. A brand is an expectation and, hopefully, one that is realized or exceeded.

“But what’s the stuff of brands?” the reporter pressed. “Most of my readers are not experts on branding but they understand its importance. And so much of what has been written and spoken about brands can feel like so much mumbo-jumbo. Is there something simple and concrete you can give my readers to build on?”



*How does a brand stand the test of time? Build a solid foundation and stack it with characteristics or personality traits, tangible benefits, emotional benefits and a single most important promise.*

That’s when the light went on. Simple... concrete...build. “Tell your readers that good, solid brand architecture can be very effective in building good, solid brands.”

### **Brand from the ground up**

One way to look at a brand is in the form of a building. Like any structure built for the long run, your brand starts with a stout foundation. This can be drawn from many sources and reference points,

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including history, legacy, culture, mission, vision, values...you know, all that up-front business plan material. But the key factor is strength. What is the true strength of your brand? What is it that has created customers and kept them? What is that

What is the **"soul"** that...stretches end-to-end within the totality of your business?

"soul" that, perhaps invisible, stretches end-to-end within the totality of your business? Find this (or design it if you're working on a new brand or rebuilding an existing one) and you'll likely have

the bedrock of your brand upon which everything else can stand.

Typically, stacked on your brand's foundation are *Brand Characteristics or Personality Traits, Tangible Brand Benefits, Emotional Brand Benefits*, and the single most important *Brand Promise*. Here's an actual example of Brand Architecture from a company in the construction industry (Appropriate, isn't it?).

Before you read beyond this sentence, check out the brand structure in the image at the right and see if you can picture the kind of company the brand stands for.

This brand's *Foundation* is Understanding and Commitment. The company truly seeks to understand customer needs, in fact the needs and wants of everyone connected to it. And, the company has a long history of making commitments and sticking by them come hell or high water. It gets product



We've got two words for the person who first said "leveraging synergies."

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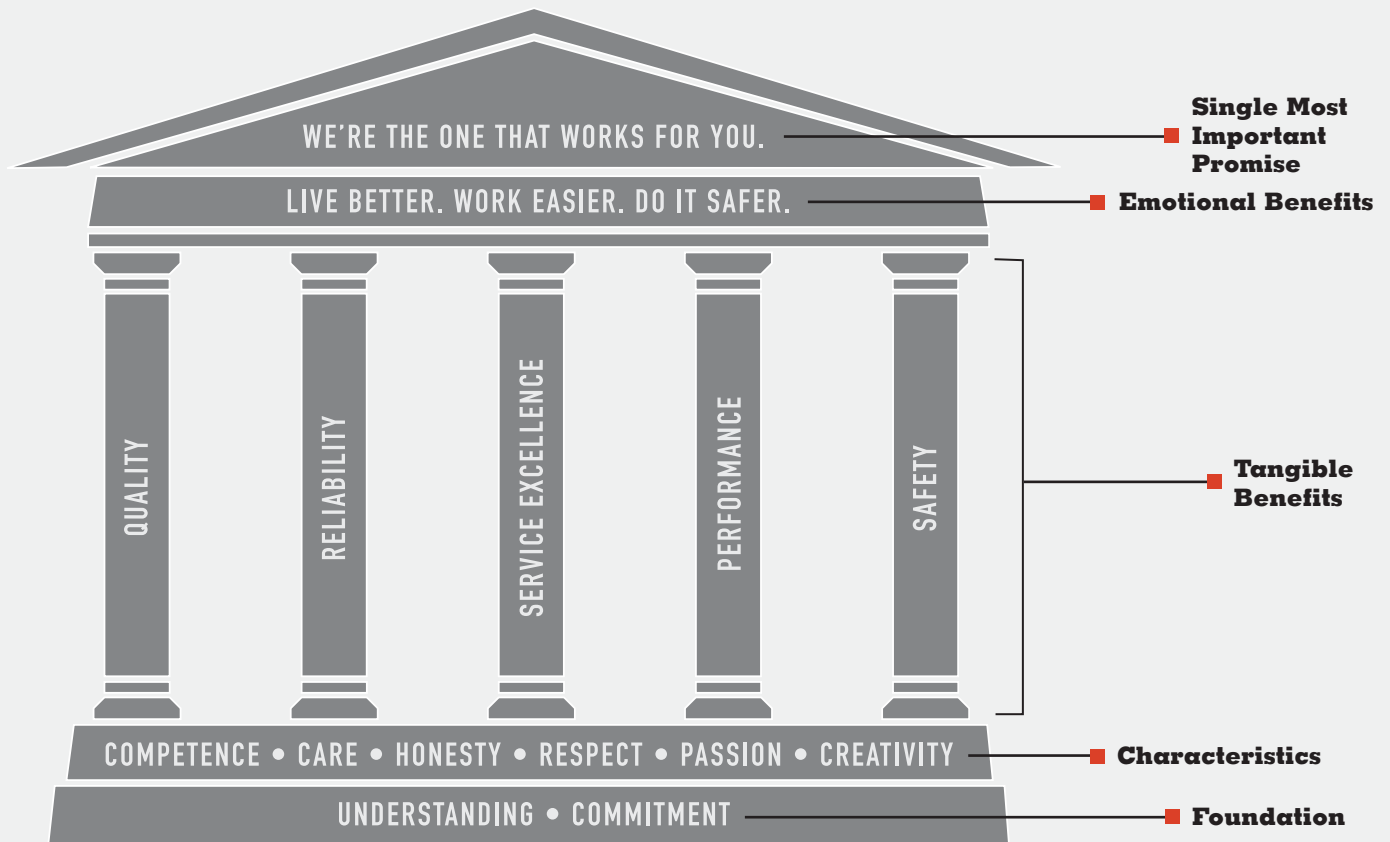
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inspiration by understanding how its customers work and what they need to be more productive. It builds stronger channel relationships by making commitments to getting products on the shelf more efficiently and helping to sell them off the shelves more effectively than any competitor.

connections to brands and these *Emotional Benefits* can be very powerful.

All these things support a *Brand Promise*...that single most important reason why anyone should care, and keep caring. In the case of the example here, “We’re the one that works for you.” it’s a promise drawn right from the Foundation



After laying the foundation for your brand, you’re ready to build up. The strength of your brand architecture will lie in how well the parts function together. After all, what is a building without walls, pillars, or a roof?

*Brand Characteristics* describe the traits that define how the company and brand works, creates experiences, and in our example, puts Understanding and Commitment into practice everyday.

The key *Tangible Benefits* are exactly that—those benefits that can be seen, felt, experienced, calculated, and compared. With business-to-business audiences, facts are very important. Oftentimes it’s far easier for these audiences to connect with a brand first on tangible or physical grounds. But we all know that brand attraction and loyalty go well beyond speeds and feeds. There are personal

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and through the entire brand structure. Whether it’s designing a product that saves installation time, or guaranteed same-day shipments, or tuned-in promotions that build traffic at distributor locations, this brand proves day-in and day-out that it “works for you.” Your brand promise needs to do the same—make a promise and keep it continuously.

Use the example here as a model or “blueprint” for your brand. You’ll find that your brand will be noticed, appreciated, functional, practical, expressive, experienced, and will stand up over time...just like any great structure.