

# Talking Business

with PETER SWITZER



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## Graeme Gladman

is a former Creative Director for some of Australia's largest brands and is now the founding principal and creator of BrandQuest. Graeme is an expert on brand and marketing, and he joins us with some insights to apply to your company.

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**PS** My next guest on *Talking Business* is Graeme Gladman who is the former Creative Director for some of Australia's largest brands, and is now the founding principle and creator of Brand Quest. Graeme is an expert on brand and marketing and joins us with some insights on how to apply this to your company.

Mate, thanks for joining us on *Talk Business*.

**GG** You're welcome, thanks, Peter.

**PS** Now, when did the Brand Quest idea come up?

**GG** It started about 2006 and, like most businesses, the catalyst was a throw away line between a current client of mine and myself. He'd just returned from some consulting in the States where he'd done an MBA at the prestigious Kellogg University, and he'd been working for a number of years in the States. He came back here and, as a client and a provider of services to him and his business, he said to me, 'you know Graeme, the big difference between the States and Australia? SMEs in the States get marketing, and in Australia they just don't seem to get it', and that was the catalyst for our business.

**PS** So what is it that we don't get about SMEs?

**GG** It's a good question. We think that we see too many businesses moving straight to tactics and implementations, whereas, as you'll know, whether you're building a house, going shopping with your wife... Well, everything starts with a plan, every success starts with a plan, and in business more so than anywhere else. Let's say a marketing strategy drives your tactics – and you will be amazed, Peter, at the businesses we see, and I'm not just talking SME businesses, but big businesses that I've worked on who also don't actually have a concise, simple strategy that drives the organisation's marketing.

**PS** And before you do the planning, is it a good idea to do the research as well?

**Graeme Gladman**

**GG** Most people would think that, and that's the first reaction. Our process at Brand Quest initially does away with research. Let me rephrase that, does away with traditional research. When we work with customers to build their marketing strategies, we believe intrinsically that the people in the business know most about their business, and when we work in workshops with them you would be amazed at the insights that we can bring out of them that are knowingly. They already hold the knowledge of what their customers look like, how to get more good customers like the ones they've got, how to definitely know who their best customers are. So we start with what we call *motivational segmentation*, rather than research. We really try to get them to picture the kind of customers in the market by motivation – that is, what needs do these people coming into the market look for that we can provide. And we work across a whiteboard, and we get the knowledge from the people in the company, we workshop this, and we might have 30/40 different motivations, and then we distil, and distil, and distil until we get down to six, seven or eight motivations of the customers and that's what we then work on with them, on developing the marketing strategy. After that, to provide that, we may then go to research.

**PS** So, you actually think that inside the business memory of a business owner is actually a very full understanding of the profile of their customers but they're not actually marketing to that profile, they know that they're not really, sort of, seeing it in full?

**GG** Couldn't have put it better myself. And interestingly, and not surprisingly, they are so busy, these senior managers, boards, stakeholders, whatever, in their business, they are so busy that they don't recognise the intrinsic knowledge they have that we, as marketers, pull that knowledge out of them, if you like, and represent it to them. Again, in our workshops it's fascinating to see the outcome of this brainstorming after an hour or so. It's like Eureka! It happens almost inevitably, and we say, 'we didn't create this, you people had it there all the time, you just didn't realise it!'

**Graeme Gladman**

**PS** We're talking to Graeme Gladman from Brand Quest. Tough question I haven't given you notice about, but I'm sure you will come up with an answer. What company do you think has done the best in really building and leveraging off their brand?

**GG** Thanks for the question without notice, I love that. In Australia, let me think... Let me give you one that I have personal history with and that's the Optus brand. Virtually from day one I was involved in that, and I think they've made a great job of continuity, of understanding their position in the marketplace and nailing their position as they've grown. What started out as a duopoly is now a fragmented market with the new players that have come in over the years. But I think the announcement of the Yes, which is a summary of this kind of can do philosophy that started way back at the start when this company arrived and setup in Australia... I think they're a good example that comes to mind.

**PS** And in a sense is unforgettable, isn't it? So, what does an SME have to do to build up their brand, because what I've got to say is, we haven't got the money to market, to get everyone to know us? What's the new age solution to get the brand out there without having to spend large amounts of money?

**GG** Now that's a question that I am pleased you asked. [laughter] My many years in the business and my partner, Jason, we built the intellectual property of Brand Quest. It was based on two predication, one is that I've already mentioned, that for whatever reasons, essentially Australian SME's don't quite understand marketing in its fullest, many of them think straight that marketing equals advertising, and you and I know that's not the point. Our whole predication is based on clarity, consistency, speed to market, and also levelling the playing field. Sophisticated marketing strategies, as you rightly pointed out, historically have cost six figure sums and have taken six or eight months for consultancies to deliver, and lots and lots of meeting hours tying up executives and support staff etc. Clearly, that's a process that's very hard for medium sized companies to get

**Graeme Gladman**

into because they haven't got time to stop their business. So the process we've developed is all about clarity, consistency and speed. We believe that it's better to be 90 percent correct and learning within the market and adapting, rather than spending six figure sums and waiting for six months. You look at the climate we've just come out of, if you were a finance company or a mortgage broker and you decided to embark on a sophisticated strategy to get the business right and humming, by the time you started three months ago the whole scenario and the category has changed irrevocably. So we believe that speed to market is one of the key advantages, if you like, of the process we've developed for medium sized businesses.

**PS** And what about the role of PR? Because when I'm thinking about a small business that came out of nowhere and used PR brilliantly, and the owner will claim he never spent a real lot of money, and that was John Symond of Aussie Homeloans... Is that the kind of moral that people should be looking at?

**GG** I wouldn't predict anything at the outset, but what I would say is that every marketing strategy should begin with a media or tactics neutral approach. You shouldn't bring any assumptions to the table upfront, you let the strategy drive the tactics and it's quite often that we – as an advertising guy I still say to people that we do a number of seminars for News Limited around the country and in those seminars I preach to people, like PR editorial is the best marketing money can't buy. And so now we're a big believer in PR and as I said before, marketing is not just about advertising, advertising is simply one little outtake of it. As I say to my clients, wool is an outcome of sheep but so are legs of lamb and other things, it's not just about advertising.

**PS** One final question. I think a lot of people in small business would care about how much money they should be spending on their marketing and their brand building? Give me a percentage of sales or something like that.

**Graeme  
Gladman**

**GG** I will give you a percentage, but first let me just give a little bit of context to the question. Marketing is everything that touches the customer, so the figure I'm going to give you as an example includes everything from websites to...

**PS** Business cards.

**GG** Business cards, stationary, advertising, pamphlets...

**PS** Messages on hold.

**GG** Messages on hold, there you go, seminar attendance etc. Now all of that should come in under the marketing, anything that affects the customer, or the potential customer, should come under marketing. As a benchmark 10 percent, but let me say, we see companies spending 20 percent and it depends on the category of course.

**PS** Mate, if people want to know more about what you're doing, what's the website?

**GG** Brandquest.com.au.

**PS** Thanks for joining us on *Talking Business*.

**GG** You're most welcome, it's been a pleasure Peter.