

Finola Howard: Hello everyone, and welcome to How Great Marketing Works. And this is our Inspiring Entrepreneurs Series. It's a little bit different today because I also think it's kind of the Inspiring Expert Series or Inspiring Legend series because I have the wonderful Marty Neumeier here with me today to share a little bit of time with you and also to share some of his story, where he's come from.

One of the things that I love about his own profile is that he said he knew he wanted to be a graphic designer when he was seven. And that whole journey to where he is now, working with CEOs, having written so many wonderful books and changing the lives of so many professionals and companies around the world. So welcome, Marty. Delighted to have you here.

Marty Neumeier: Well, thank you Finola.

Finola Howard: You're very welcome. So let's start - and hello everyone, I'm delighted you're here with us too. Please share with us, how you knew from age seven what you wanted to be when you grew up. So, I'll let you take it away.

Marty Neumeier: That's pretty crazy, but true. In second grade, I think it was, they asked everybody, you know, what do you want to be when you grow up? And, you know, "I want to be a nurse", or a little boy would say, "I want to be a firetruck". You know what I mean? They didn't even know anything. They just knew that, you know, cowboy or whatever. And I said, commercial artist. Well, what is that? And I said, you know, drawing things and you know, you get money for it.

Finola Howard: How did you know at seven what that was?

Marty Neumeier: Because my mother went to design school. She went to art school to be a fashion illustrator. And you know, I used to watch her draw, just like, she would just doodle. You know how most people doodle and they make little squares and squiggles sometimes. She would be, when she was on the telephone talking with someone about something completely different, she would be drawing these like beautiful faces, you know, sort of real realistic, beautifully proportioned faces. And they'd be all over the page by the time she was finished. And I'd say, how did you do that? And she said, oh, you know, you can learn that. It's just something you learn. And I went, you're kidding me. Can you show me that? And she goes, oh yeah, that's just, let's draw a face into the circle and eyes go here and you know, and then if you want to make it like in perspective, you change it.

Marty Neumeier: And it was way over my head, but she told me I could do it. So, I started drawing things. And when you do that at a young age and you have someone to teach you, you get pretty good at it pretty fast. And when you show your work to other kids, like at school in seventh grade or eighth grade, they can't believe it.

They're just like, that's magic. That's totally magic. I used to bring to school pictures of like clipper ships with all the sails and perspective and all the little lines drawn, very complicated, you know, waves parting and seagulls. And I got a bird book from my mother and I was copying all the birds, you know, in color and what I took from that was, well, that's what I am, you know, I'm just a kid. I don't know what the options are in life. I just thought obviously I am the school artist, there's nobody else in my class and that's what I'm going to be. And so I just set my mind to that and it certainly simplified all my choices in life because I knew that's what I was going to do. And it was only later that I realized life was bigger than that first thing you choose in seventh grade, at seven years old rather.

Finola Howard: Fantastic. But then you moved on from that. And I'm sure that has influenced how you think because you are drawing as you think, I'm sure.

Marty Neumeier: I think so. Yeah. I mean, I was interested in a lot more things too. I just focused on it as a career, but I was pretty good at English class. I went to Catholic school so there was a big emphasis on that. And there wasn't an emphasis on anything else creative, so that that was the thing you could do. You know, and I could spell and diagram a sentence and all that. So I was picking that up and I think that influenced me quite a bit. And it was only when I was, oh, I would say early twenties when I started realizing if I want to be a graphic designer, that's really taking control over a piece of communication and the communication isn't complete if it's just graphics. There has to be a verbal component. There almost always is, right? Unless it's something visual, like a trademark or illustration or something.

Marty Neumeier: So I wanted to control that too. And I worked with copywriters in the beginning and I just thought, you know, I could just do this myself. I can have much more control over it and get a result that doesn't look like words stuck onto pictures or pictures stuck onto words. It looks like they were born together, right? They were stripped down to, it was just like, you couldn't take one piece away and have it work. So I think that was the beginning of being a writer and also realizing that strategy is really important, that you can do great graphic design or design a great product. But if you don't connect that with a business outcome, like some expected outcome, you're just never gonna get very far and you're not going to be able to explain your work to someone who would pay you a lot to do it, to work on it.

Finola Howard: At what point did you realize that in your career? At what point did you, because it's interesting, a lot of graphic designers won't have the verbage, they will be pure designers and will bring, so you're unusual.

Marty Neumeier: Right, they'll go into a meeting and say, so what I was thinking or, and then they'll show you a bunch of things and it's like if I were a business person, I say, well, who cares what you're thinking? It's like, with all due respect, what's this

going to lead to? What are we getting out of this? How is this going to work? And if you can't explain that, if you can't connect the dots for them, like I'm doing it like this, so we can create this, which will change this, which will create profits, then you're going to be sort of pushed down in the, in the food chain, right? They'll stick you in a little room with no windows basically and a computer and they'll tell you what to do. So if you want to have control over your work and do work that you're proud of and that has an effect in the world, you need to kind of move up the food chain and start learning about, a little bit about how business works, how marketing works, where you fit in the brand community, how you're going to add value.

Marty Neumeier: You need to prove it. You need maybe to get cozy with research and testing of your own ideas so that it's not just about your opinion. And I know from being a designer you can have a very strong opinion about your work. You can believe in it like crazy and it can still be wrong. And I only found that out when I was probably 40 years old before I actually tested that, like tested my work to see how good it was, tested ideas against each other. And then what I found is, well, you know, sometimes I'm right and sometimes I'm just fantastically wrong. So, and I certainly think my clients, cause I was running a design firm, my clients were also wrong quite a bit. So, well the reason clients go wrong is because they understand their position in this process to be a decision maker.

Marty Neumeier: Like you show me some ideas and I pick one or I take two and I tell you to mix those two together, this is the worst possible thing. So what I started to do was say, look, none of us are experts. We're all trying here. We all bring some expertise to it, but who is this really for? Is it for us in this room or is it for customers? And the client would always say, well, it's for customers obviously. Right, so why don't we get some customers in the process just to make sure that we're not missing a point of view that we should be thinking about. And so I started bringing clients to real world situations, like into a store where we were designing a package, to go on a shelf next to some competitors and we'd talk to customers and I would take notes and the client would be on the other side of the aisle listening, you know, pretending to be a shopper.

Marty Neumeier: And I'd get all these very cogent points from customers of what they were understanding from the work because, you know, when you get close to something, you kind of, whether it's the actual work or whether it's your career, if you get too close to something, you can lose perspective. And so it's just great to get a preview of how that package or whatever it is you're designing, logo or whatever, is going to play out in the real world before you commit to it. Before you commit to it, you have a chance to improve it, you have a chance to learn from it. So building those steps in was just a huge thing for me. And it changed how I think, how I work. It made me more strategic because I was working with the client in real time talking about like, what are we trying to achieve?

Marty Neumeier: Because they didn't often know. They would say, here's our product. Can you put, you know, sell it. I'd say, well, what are you, what is the competition doing? What are the choices that customers have when they go to the store? Who else are they thinking about? Oh, wow, okay. Well, and they had all that information, but they weren't sharing it. I said, okay, so who's number one in this, in this list of people for your customer? Who's number one, who's number two, who's number three? Because number one is gonna win almost every time. Unless number one is so expensive they can't afford it. And then number two is going to win. If you're number five, what are you doing? How are you going to compete? So all those kinds of questions really made clients think. They made me think. And I realized that I had to be strategic with my work because if I didn't do it, the client was certainly not going to even think of it.

Marty Neumeier: They're just trusting that it's all gonna work out. But you know, I wanted my packages to succeed in the market because it feels good to do that. But also you can point to it for your next client and say, you know what, I went to Apple computer. I did all their software packaging and sales went up 40% in six months without changing the products. Then they'd go, how many products is that? It was 15 products. They all average 40%. Average 40%. President said it, here it is. And they'd go, okay then how much is it going to cost? I would say, well, it's going to cost more than those other guys that are competing with me. But if you want that kind of result, you pay that kind of price. They always do.

Finola Howard: You benchmark when you walk in the door.

Marty Neumeier: Yeah. Right. Well, you talk about actual results and you talk about how you got them and if it all hangs together as a story, they're going to trust you more than someone else even when they pay more for it. So that was like a light bulb going off. And I said, well that's remarkable that, so this is what strategy is about. So I was using strategy in my own business to separate myself from the competition. And then I realized my clients need strategy too because they're not that way. They're just concerned with day to day stuff, you know, selling stuff everyday, dealing with shareholders or whatever they have to do. It's not long term thinking and it's certainly not how to make a design work in the marketplace. They're trusting you on that. So that was, that was the start of all these books.

Marty Neumeier: I started reading about this and realizing that no one was really paying much attention to it. Good to Great, you mentioned that earlier before we went live. That's a good book. People should read that. It's a little bit old now, but had some groundbreaking ideas in it. I picked up on those. I picked up on all the books of, Trout and Ries, on positioning. That's how I got into this whole thing. Their thinking to me it was so obvious and so clear that it just had to be right, and it was. And then, you know, if you're a designer, because I think there's a lot of designers here today, you need to attach your work to that sort of strategic thinking and then it becomes very powerful and you can talk about it in ways that will get you listened to, you know, people will trust you more.

Marty Neumeier: But I think the main thing is to say that and then say, and guess what, we're going to test some of these ideas, the important ones with actual customers because we want to know before we, you know, green light something, we want to know if it's going to work. Are you okay with that? They'll say, how much does it cost? You'll say, well, it's only five or 10% of the whole thing. They'll go, good investment. And then, and then you start to really learn about your craft, whatever it is you're doing, you start to learn what works and doesn't work. So I really recommend that. Well, I think we covered that pretty much, The Brand Gap and Zag both talk about that.

Finola Howard: I love both. So, what I wanted to ask you to talk a little bit about was, how Liquid Agency, which is your agency now do what they call a scramble.

I shared with you my own process of working with clients and how I work with the graphic designer. Because I'm a strategist. I work with the graphic designer, I work with the client, it's very collaborative. And over the last few years I've noticed that more and more, I'm working with the HR person in the organization to actually make sure what's on the outside is on the inside.

One of the things that you mentioned, was that you don't like to think of the employees as a customer, whereas in marketing speak, we talk about the internal customer and I'd love you to talk about why, and I liked you mentioned this idea of porous walls not to be so rigid on what we think of as the naming of things, I suppose.

Marty Neumeier: Hmm, the naming of things is important. By the way, I have a dictionary.

Finola Howard: Yeah, I know.

Marty Neumeier: It works across all my books, all eight books I think. It's called the Brand A to Z and it's free. If you go to my website, [www.martyneumeier.com](http://www.martyneumeier.com) you can download it for free. It's fun. It's fun to look through. It's very simple. Anyway, yes, naming things is important and I think you're right that it's good to think about employees as customers in a way. But I think if you go too far with that, you lose the fact that they're employees. They have their own set of concerns. They're getting paid, they have to do what you say, or at least pretend to. Customers, do not. Customers are true volunteers, they only hang with you when they want to. And it's different with employees. They stick around longer and they know they have a duty to the company.

Finola Howard: I liked that, that idea of customer as volunteer.

Marty Neumeier: They're not, you know, in the old days, you know, branding was about, you create a product, you decide what it's going to be, you decide what to name it, you create some messaging and you blast it out there on TV with, with millions of dollars. And often there's no choice for people cause they only know about

your brand because you're the one talking all the time. They hate it. They hate that you're doing that. But that's the choice they have. So they only can say yes or no to your product. Now, customers have a lot of choices and they can talk, they get a view into what you're doing online and they also talk to each other. So it's no longer this one way conversation. It doesn't work like that anymore. You really have to seduce people to join your tribe, which is what I call it now. Your tribe, your customer tribe, your brand tribe is people that support you and probably will support you even when you're not doing things very well. Even when things aren't going well, they'll still support you, they're loyal to you and they're loyal to each other within the tribe. That's how tribes work. So that's really what you're creating is a tribe, if you're building a brand. You're creating not only individual customers, but tribe members who will reinforce what's good about your brand with each other.

Marty Neumeier: So that's a great thing to be able to talk about and to offer to clients because, you know, leaders of companies intuitively understand, I'm building a, they think of it as maybe a family or something, but a family of customers or a family of employees, but they realize it's a community and someone has to take charge of that community. And I think that person should be, the title for that person in a medium or large sized company, should be Chief Brand Officer. Chief Brand Officer should be at the top or near the top of the company. Not somebody that works for a Marketing Director. So if anything, it's the other way around. Marketing Directors need to work for whoever's in charge of the brand. So my example, my poster boy for that is Steve Jobs. So Steve Jobs was CEO of Apple, but he was really the CBO of Apple. He was the Chief Brand Officer. He managed the products, the communications, the customers, the developers. He did not manage shareholders. He did not manage finance.

Marty Neumeier: So he was something different. And actually he didn't manage the company. There was some probably Tim Cook that finally in the end was the real CEO. So he took over for Steve Jobs. But now there's no Steve jobs. There's nobody running the brand in Apple. That's why you're seeing less innovation. It's less exciting now. It's more status quo, keeping, keeping things moving. You know, that's, that's the typical work of a Chief Operating Officer or a CEO. But what you need is a CBO if you want to keep innovating, which is what Steve jobs promised everybody.

Finola Howard: And delivered. Shall I, we have some questions.

Marty Neumeier: Oh, good. I love questions.

Finola Howard: That would be really good, yeah. So, I'm going to throw a couple of questions at you like this. So we have a question from Greg who has design agency in Nebraska and he says, what's the future of branding? Is there a new word, a new approach and a new method? And I went back to him and I said, I asked him to clarify a little because I wanted more and he said yes, I'm feeling there is

a need for a rebirth or revolution of this thing called branding. It's largely misunderstood. And since Marty's is such a pioneering mind, I'm curious as to what he sees as the next horizon for the work we all do. And is there a new label to attach to it? In other words, what problems are we all solving in 40 years? The same? Different? Slightly different? Vastly different?

Marty Neumeier: I understand that it's difficult to use the word brand because it has baggage. In the last, you know, hundred years, probably before that branding was identifying products and companies, you know, it was logos and messaging and that sort of thing. And it's become much more than that. It's more, much more inclusive. So that's hard to get across if you've got into your mind a brand is a logo, you know, if you're the CEO and you think that's what branding is, it's all the corporate identity stuff. Yeah, it's going to be difficult for you to understand that. It's more than that. So should we create another word for that? And I think, no, I just think it's just gonna be this painful transition until people realize that the word they know is bigger. I struggled with this for a long time, but I think coming up with a new word for it... new words can't just be minted like that. They have to be organic and we already have it. So it's easier to expand the word we already have. So that's that.

Marty Neumeier: The other thing I see happening in branding, happening right now is that companies understand that to do this work properly, they need to engage the whole company in this process, right? So it's a cultural thing too. So, it's about designing your culture and CEOs really are interested in this. How do I design a culture? You would think that a CEO could get people to do whatever he or she wants. They're the boss, right? But that's the thing they worry about all the time. It's like I keep telling him what I want from them and they don't follow me. So it's a continuing frustration. So the culture is broken in that case there. He's unable to get people to follow.

Marty Neumeier: So what you need to do is, is work on that culture, redesign the culture, create new processes, create new understandings of what we're all doing together. I mean, branding is just solving this problem. How do you get a complex organization to execute a simple idea? Good brands are always very simple and easy to understand. You know, Nike for example, it's about finding your inner athlete. Okay, I get that, that's what I thought. You know, everything else just ladders up to that, right? Cool. Apple is about using technology to create more, you know, to make you smarter, right? To make you smarter. And more designed, focused, let's say in their case. Every good brand has a very simple proposition, but how do you get the whole company on that wavelength, right? And so that's where the CEO's are at a loss because they've never been trained to do that.

Marty Neumeier: They've been trained to think of brand as logos and it's something the Marketing Manager handles and it's really more like the Marketing Manager should report to the Chief Brand Officer because brand is every bit as big as the

company itself. You think about a company that's got an inside and an outside. The inside is all the usual CEO stuff. The outside is the brand. It's the way the important people think of you. The important people are customers. So this is something companies are realizing that they need someone to manage customers, the whole customer community because that's how they're gonna succeed. Customers have a voice, they're volunteers. They're not conscripts. You can't make them do anything. You need them. And they in a sense, they run the company. If you're doing it right, your customers are running the company and you're serving them, serving customers.

Finola Howard: So you're teaching your employees to serve customers always then, and not just to serve process.

Marty Neumeier: That's right. So if you look at it like the whole sort of linkage, the management supports employees, employees serve customers, customers create profits and serving shareholders and shareholders need to support management, the leaders. And what's happening is shareholders are saying, no, give me money now I want my money off the top. That's when companies go wrong, you know? So a good CEO is one that can hold off the shareholders and say, no, you're last in line. You get money because all this other stuff is working first, because we're managing our employees well, they're serving the customers well, customers are making money for you, you get it last. That's just the way it has to work. So that's the reverse of what it has been. And that's why business has been just so horrible in the last 50 years. It's like terrible to work for some of these big businesses. Shareholders come first. Customers hate these companies and there's still a lot of them around there, but we're in the middle of a kind of business revolution where everything's getting flipped upside down. So that's the subject of my second to the last book, *The Brand Flip*, it describes how branding has flipped everything for good. I mean, it's a good trend.

Finola Howard: I want to ask you a question or rather someone here wants to ask a question. She says, Rachel, who's a designer, what if you don't? And she's designer of homewares. What if you don't have a whole company or team to help or work with you? You work for yourself but need to clarify your brand, your customer.

Marty Neumeier: Yeah, so I think you need to figure out how to work, be part of various teams. So if you're a solo person, maybe you start networking with people either by just, because you're already working with them on different projects, but volunteer to go to meetings where the other players are instead of just being sort of divided and conquered, you know. So you say to whoever hired you, well, you know, whatever I'm designing needs to fit with the strategy. So can I be in the meeting with the strategist where that happens? You know, just ask and just keep insinuating yourself into groups of people where you can have your voice heard, learn something from them. Make sure that your work dovetails with theirs. And then if anyone asks your opinion, you tell them, look, I think teams

work great, but you have to have people working simultaneously. You can't separate them if you really want coordination between the various players.

Finola Howard: But if, because I know Rachel, if this is a small business and that, so she is her business. So it's that working on your own question.

Marty Neumeier: Right, well you don't have a lot of say do you? So you can ask and you can keep asking and you can politely say, well, who else is working on various parts of this? What is this, what do I have, how does my work connect with other people's work? And then you say, okay, can I be in that meeting? And maybe you don't get paid a lot for that, to go to those meetings, but I think it's a start and you'll be taken more seriously when you start asking questions that are above your pay grade. Like that's what I always did. It's like I was really nervous the first time I said, what's the strategy for this product? Not knowing very much about strategy at all. And they would go, I don't know, we don't have a strategy.

Marty Neumeier: Ah, okay, well maybe I can help you with that. Cause you need a strategy. We need a strategy together. So, you know, read more about branding, read about, well I think The Brand Gap is a good place to start, my first book, because it talks about collaboration and it poses a framework where a company can hire a lot of individual people and get them to work as a virtual team. It's a good way to do it. If you have someone very strong within the company that can make all those people play together nicely, you can get great, great work and so wouldn't you want to be on that team that's doing great, great work.

Finola Howard: Cool. Another question for you, does the customer client experience have a knock on effect on building brand and if so, how can you manage this?

Marty Neumeier: Okay, you cut out there for a minute. Can you repeat it?

Finola Howard: Does customer, this is from Kate, does customer or client experience have a knock on effect on building a brand? And if so, how can you manage this?

Marty Neumeier: I don't know what client experience means in this case. Do you think you can explain that in different way?

Finola Howard: Yes, I'll ask Kate if she can explain it in a different way.

Marty Neumeier: Customer experience is really important to building a brand because that's how they form an opinion. It's one way to form an opinion. This actual use of a brand, right? Or a product or a service. When you actually experience it, you say, oh, okay, I think I get what it is. And you make an, you form an opinion about it. You know, you're giving it a reputation or it has a reputation with you. So that's what branding is. It's a commercial reputation. Lots of ways to, those are all touch points by the way. So the touch points are places where the

product or the service touches customers, where they come in contact with it. So it could be seeing the name, it could be hearing the name, it could be seeing a television commercial. It could be seeing the product on a shelf. It could be using the product, it could be reading about the company in a magazine.

Marty Neumeier: It could be any of these things. Or hearing somebody, these days, hearing someone talking, talking about or seeing it on Twitter. Those are all touch points that, as a brand builder, you need to try to control as much as possible. You can't control them, but you can try to influence them in a way that gives you the outcome that you want. You need to be aware of them. I'd probably say that my definition of a brand is a person's gut feeling about a product, service organization. It's not a product. Brand is not a product. Brand is not a logo. The brand is not the sum of all experiences. What it is, is a person's understanding about a product, service or company. And so it's in their heads, it's in their heads and that's where the battle is fought. You have to understand what's in there, who's competing for their attention in their heads.

Marty Neumeier: Who are the competitors? What are they saying, what advantages they have over you? How can you give them something that would meet their expectations better than what the competition can? Is it price? We hope not. Is it, it could be anything. It could be that your brand seems more like you than the other brands and you can identify with other people using that brand. So you join that tribe, not even knowing why. You just know that my friends are doing it, I'm going to do it. I trust my friends. So these are all touchpoints.

Finola Howard: Let me ask you another question. This is from Matt, who's a branding consultant in Nottingham and I know he did your, new masterclass. What do you think brands should focus on in order to prepare for an uncertain future and what practical things might they need to put in place to ensure they are set up for success?

Marty Neumeier: Yeah, well as far as predicting the future, of course that can't be done, but the best way to understand where your brand should go is to pay attention to customers and see what they're saying and social media is just beautiful for that. I mean, the most important thing it does for companies is let you get some insight into what customers are thinking. So if you're involved in social media about your brand and you are watching it, you'll find people that are maybe unhappy with parts of what you're doing. And they say, well, what's wrong with this stupid company? Why don't they do x? You're going, why don't we do x? And if you start hearing those kinds of people saying that a lot there, they're giving you a glimpse of what's sort of missing in your company that you could fill in.

Marty Neumeier: And they're not saying, I'm going to go to a different company cause I know they have x. They're going to say, it's just not there, and I wish they would do that. So, and after a while, if you're really good at this, if you have a firm or a

department that's really good at this, they'll find those people that are always coming up with future ideas for you. And they'll target those and they'll pay attention to those people because they're really good at it. There's just some people that are ahead of everybody else, right? They're always thinking ahead. Well, that's free. That's free ideas right there. And so, that's one way to stay ahead. The other way is just do what Steve Jobs did. He empathized so much with customers. His view of customers, his sort of advanced view of customers, he knew what they wanted, he didn't have to do research. He knew it. He was just in that head space. Some people are good at that. Some people aren't. So that's another way.

Finola Howard: I think that, you don't stop the research.

Marty Neumeier: Well he famously said he doesn't believe in research, but they did tons of research. I was there. But the research was typically not in deciding to do something, but in making sure that it was working the way that they imagined it was. And it was creating the bond with customers that they hoped it was. And so they would sort of be testing iterations of things quietly, privately, internally. And then with certain people on the outside very carefully, not to you know, to alert the media and, let the cat out of the bag. They wanted to fail off-Broadway, not on Broadway. Right. So they wanted to test it out quietly and then when they knew worked, like when Steve Jobs showed the iPhone for the first time, he said, "It Just Works". Well it also took a lot of effort to get to that stage where it just works, right?

Marty Neumeier: But that's, you know, he was into perfecting something before he announced it. So that's one way to do it. It's a fine way to do it if you can. And you need designers to perfect things. So another reason I think products shouldn't be created, like, in an evolutionary way, I think they should be designed. I don't think they should be trial and error on the stage where everybody could see it until it's right. I mean that's kind of what Microsoft did and you can see what happened to them after a while. They got a really good early start and then nobody wanted their products cause they weren't designed.

Finola Howard: Yeah, great. I have another question for you. A design agency in Dublin, Barbara, she says, Marty it was you who changed my business for the better after I first read The Brand Gap and I have since been selling the idea of putting brand strategy first before any deliverables. Thank you for that. She said, I want to talk about the reluctance to spend money on brand. I see so many small businesses relying solely on referrals and projecting and this is a real Irish phrase, a dog's dinner of an image to the world. So my question is, what do you say to this sector to educate them on the value of building a strong brand by starting with strategy and let them know how it can change their business for the better.

Marty Neumeier: I just give them a free copy of The Brand Gap.

- Finola Howard: Great. It works. I love it.
- Marty Neumeier: That's how many people are doing that. Lots of designers, they're just frustrated. They say, just read this, okay, then we'll talk. Tell me you think of this before we talk. Or any of my books, which are all slightly different topics, but if it's about strategy, Zag is good. If it's about building a culture, The Designful Company is good. If it's about social media and branding, then The Brand Flip and so forth. So that's how people are using the books. They're giving them away as just like, you know, this is part of the package. If you want to work together, read this because we're pretty much in line with this. And then it'll be a way, it'll be a little, our little book club. We'll talk about this and see how this could apply to your company.
- Finola Howard: And even probably put stickies on key passages or something that you want them to read in case they say they don't have time.
- Marty Neumeier: Yeah. Read this page or two pages. There's 50 words a page in one of my books. But yeah, read this chapter and let's talk. You'll find out if they're anywhere near your wavelength. It may open their minds. You still have quite a bit of opportunity to build on whatever it is that they're reading without, you know, reading a book isn't the same as, like, following a formula. At least my books aren't, there's no formulas. They're just principles. What you do with them is up to you, how you personalize those and professionalize those is up to you.
- Finola Howard: I would also make a suggestion, which is your book Scramble, because that is really, I loved reading it. I loved reading it because it was storytelling and it took all of these ideas from The Brand Gap and Zag and all of that and brought them to life in that scenario. So it wasn't that idea of theory. It was, "This Is How We Did It".
- Marty Neumeier: Yes. So for participants here who don't know that book, it's written as a business thriller. So it's a thriller about a business that suddenly is struggling and has to do something differently to survive. And there are the usual villains and heroes and so forth in there. But the idea is to explore how using these principles would actually feel in the real world. Like, you know, if you read something in a book, it sounds great, you know, then you go to try it and practice and you go, well, people aren't letting me do it. It's them. And that's what happens. It's like, you know, unless everybody's on the same wavelength, it's gonna be difficult to get any new ideas through. So, you know, so this book explores how to get through that, how to get everyone on the same page, that whole process of a, you hinted at it and it's called swarming.
- Marty Neumeier: The book is called Scramble and that's part of, that's one way of swarming. Swarming is when you have everybody working on the problem at the same time. The designers, the clients, the writers, the strategists, the researchers are all working in the same room, sharing ideas in real time instead of doing it step-

by-step. Cause the problem with doing things step-by-step is that usually the so-called important decisions are made first, then the lesser ones and lesser ones and lesser ones until you just down to the details. But what happens is every time you make a decision up here, it's cut off for the people down there. They can't influence that decision. And I know from experience and maybe some of you designers know, after the strategy has been set, you can come up with an amazing idea that is just not part of that strategy, but it should have been. You know, they just hadn't thought of it because you thought of it and nobody had thought of it before you like, alighted on it, just in the process of your work.

Marty Neumeier: And you brought it to them and then you said, look, I got this better idea. No, no, no, that's not part of the strategy. It's cut off, that door is closed, that chapter is closed. So to avoid that, you have the book open the whole time. Everybody's working and bouncing ideas off each other until you come to some mutual decision about it. And in doing that, the work is usually better and the client is willing to defend that idea to the death after that. They will go with that no matter what, until they need to change it. They won't say later, oh that seemed good at the time. But we're not, we're not doing that anymore. We've hired a different company with a different way.

Finola Howard: Because it was theirs. They were part of its inception.

Marty Neumeier: Yeah, well they're just bought into it at that stage. I love that idea and it works great. You need to be comfortable working live in front of people, right. You have to be good enough. So it's pretty advanced branding. But for people that are fearless and also humble enough to understand that they're not always right, they thrive in this kind of thing. And it's just a really quick way to get some great results. In one week, you can prototype a whole brand, like, you know, with all the key components, the logo, maybe a name, a website, product package. If you get enough people in the room, working fast and furious, at the end of the week you can say, wow, this is what the brand could be. And then the leaders can say, do we want to do that or not? Or how much do we want to do this? Do we want to go another round and try something else? But almost inevitably they're gonna go mostly with what they've got because it's there and it's gorgeous and they helped.

Finola Howard: I love, there's a quote by David Packard of Hewlett Packard, which is, marketing is too important to be left to the marketing department. That's it. That is, be brave enough to have us all there and you get end to end. Great.

Marty Neumeier: Well, business is too important to be owned by business leaders too. I mean you know, other people can be involved. It's totally true. We all, we need more collaboration. We need more respect for each other's contributions, which can be very different. Designers think completely differently. They think with their hands often but they come up with ideas you'd never ever think about, you know, if you were being logical. At the same time, logical people have a way of

holding you, holding your nose to the grindstone. It's like, no, that's great, but that's not gonna work for us because here's what we're trying to do, did you forget? I mean, the two ways of thinking are really great together. And it's just easier to understand each other when you're in the room together. And so that's how we arrange it these days. We call it swarming. If you read Scramble, you'll see a beautiful illustration of how that works out and the difficulty of it too. It's not easy. It's, as I say, it's advanced.

Finola Howard: Yeah. Another question for you, and this is from Katya, with a design agency in Slovenia. So we've got all over the place. She designs brand identities, visual assets and shows companies how they incorporate that into their promotional material for better brand recognition. She wants to know what the future of the value of these brand assets, like visual brand identity, like logos, color schemes and things that are representing the brand visually and consistently. This is what was interesting. She feels that the value of visual assets is decreasing because we've so many possibilities to market our services and products, that consistency and recognizability in that sense isn't that important to companies anymore?

Marty Neumeier: Well observed. That's true. A friend of mine was in the peak of his career. He was a great logo designer, trademark designer, working on his own out of his garage studio and working with some of the best Silicon Valley companies, you know, and being paid quite a bit of money for these things, you know, 30 to a hundred thousand dollars for a logo and the stationery that went with it and the colors and all that kind of stuff. And then one day it stopped just like that and never came back. It was just like someone flipped a switch. And I think it was a bunch of things, you know, up to a certain point. The only way a graphic designer could influence a brand was trademarks and colors and typefaces and, you know, page design systems, templates and things like that.

Marty Neumeier: And so that business grew into something very important because it could have an effect. But what happened is people realized there are many more objects and you know, touch points that could influence customers, including websites, I think websites probably did it. I think they just saw, well, I can spend \$30,000 on a new trademark and it'll be gorgeous, or I can spend it on my website and I'll get customers from it. Right? So I think we'll just let the web design company do the logo for \$500 or whatever, just as part of their work. So it went from being the focus of attention to being kind of just not that important. But it still is important. It's super important. It's just that there are other things that are important to us. As a brand designer, you need to be open to all these things that can be designed and not focused on one.

Marty Neumeier: You know, I mean I still think a logo is worth spending \$10,000 on if the company is any kind of size at all and it may be worth spending a million on it for some companies, so it's still worth something. And to think that you can just take a logo off somebody's website or out of a book or something and it's going

to be important and valuable and long lasting. That's just insanity. So that's why we need Chief Brand Officers, to make those determinations and to make sure that everyone understands the relative value of all the pieces that go to build a brand.

Finola Howard: Cool. I'm just going to see if we have any last questions and then you might tell us... Yeah, someone was saying the book you mentioned earlier, besides The Brand Gap. We have several. We have The Brand Flip, which I can show you, The Brand Flip. We have Scramble and we have Metaskills and we have the Innovation Toolkit. So lots from Marty, but just Google Marty and you will find it. Marty, is there, can I ask you one other question, which is, is there a project that you're involved with, with Liquid Agency or recently, that you loved the most or that has always stuck with you or the story always stuck with you?

Marty Neumeier: Yeah, with Liquid Agency

Finola Howard: or any agency, it doesn't matter who, just the one that

Marty Neumeier: When I was designing software packages, that was when I learned quite a bit of the material that I'm talking about now. I did have a favorite client and it was Apple. It was their software division, which they call Claris, C L A R I S. That was the part, the division. It had its own president and so forth. They spun it off, but it was really owned by Apple. And those people were just great to work with. Open-minded, educated, bright, curious, creative people. And they were involved in a very big project, which was to change all the packaging, all the way, the whole way they communicated about software at Apple because the problem that they were facing was, Microsoft was beating the pants off of them and because it was open to all kinds of software, there's just so many more choices.

Marty Neumeier: So Apple had to create their own software for the Macintosh, mainly, so that people would buy the Macintosh. It was the, you know, without software who's going to buy. And so they really needed to succeed. It was super important. And they went out there into the marketplace with software packaging that was designed internally by Apple. And it was just completely wrongheaded. It looked like the most boring corporation in the world, more boring than IBM. It was the stated entity of the personal computer industry. More boring than that. It was just like gray and blue stripes and panels with people working in offices and then screenshots on the front next to the name. And I just said, this does not look like it came from Apple. This is not the Apple that I know, you know, all the beautiful ads and everything, beautiful logos and stuff.

Marty Neumeier: So they gave us the job, this was a big deal for us. They gave us the job of designing all 15 at once with almost an unlimited budget. It had to work all around the world in every language, in every culture. And so we did well with it. We really put a lot of effort into it and we created, I don't know, 70 or 80 ideas,

narrowed them down finally to, I believe, 18 that we presented. And up to that point, we're having a blast. You know, it's going great. And we present 18 of our best ideas in little mock ups about, you know, two inches high. We did everything miniature so people couldn't like analyze them too much. And I took them to Apple and they set it up so that everyone in the company, and I think there's probably 800 people, could vote which package they wanted.

Marty Neumeier: That was pretty scary. And then the CEO would come in at the end of the day, he'd look at the votes, he'd look at all the ideas, and he would say, okay, let's focus on these three or something. And so the voting went well, people were pretty excited, we had all the little mock ups, the little packages on a shelf on a window. The shelf is sort of like the middle part of the window. The CEO comes in, I'd never met him before. He's a really nice guy, but I didn't know, you know, he, he was very stern when he came in and he said, okay, what do we got? I only have half an hour, so let's make this quick. It's like, we've been working on this for three months, you know, he's got a half hour. And so he looks at all these packages and looks at every one, goes down the line and then he goes and looks at them again and he starts knocking them off the shelf with his finger, just these little paper packages onto the floor, every one, because they're all on the floor and he says, that's it. I don't like any of them.

Marty Neumeier: And luckily I didn't know what to say. So I just sat there for awhile and waited, no one said a word. Then I said, alright, it's the first round, so that's fair. Let's try something else. Let's put them all back up and go knock 'em down again, but leave the ones that you just, that you don't hate. All the ones you hate, take those out. The ones you don't hate, hate is the bar, leave those in. And he comes back and he says, you know what, there's three here that I don't hate.

Marty Neumeier: I said, great, now we have something to work with. And he started like, you start defending the moon, you know, things started to change and everybody started talking. And so it warmed up and then all the boxes are on the floor. And one of the marketing people said, you know, now that we've been making some progress, I'd like to talk about this one. He pulls up this one that's almost all white and it's got this very loose drawing of an icon on it, bold type and everything. So this is like, I've never seen anything like this in a software store. What about this? And the president looks at it. He goes, well that's very different cause yeah, but we want a big change, don't we? Isn't it going to be different, whatever we do? He goes, well I just don't know.

Marty Neumeier: I mean I just don't know if we have the courage to do something like that. And then he turns to me and says, can we test these? And this is where testing, we took out testing, cause it was either we test this or that one's gone. So, of course we can test these. Of course we can test these. We're going to test them in the store with real customers and we're going to tell you what they say and we're gonna bring you to the store too, okay, great. We did it. And that one, that crazy one was far and away the winner. You could see it from a mile away.

Everyone in the store said they loved it. They said, this is much more of what Apple should be doing. Why didn't you do this before? Blah, blah, blah. We went forward with it and sales went up 40% with no change in the product. And then he was a believer and the whole software industry became a believer when we told them that story because they noticed this gutsy, crazy solution to a software package. And everybody wanted our services. So that was my favorite experience.

Finola Howard: Fantastic. But you had to, it's so interesting you had to hold your ego and hold your nerve to come back from them all being on the floor.

Marty Neumeier: Yeah that was tough, not to just argue. Like most designers would say no, but my idea was, or you know, just resist. I couldn't resist. I just said, good point, why don't we find out, you know, let's test. And in that case testing proved at least that we were right about that one design. And after that I just, I was addicted to that and I just thought, I don't want to do anything that's not successful. And if I can find out before it's produced, I'm in. I don't care what it does to my thinking or my ego. It's like my ego will be fine after it succeeds and I won't show anything bad. I'll just always show work that I think is really good.

Finola Howard: Wonderful. That's a really good note to leave people on. I would like you to tell us, and thank you, I would like you to tell us where we can experience more of Marty Neumeier live because I know you're coming to Dublin. But I also know that you've these are amazing brand workshops, which you must come to Dublin for.

Marty Neumeier: We are planning to do one in Dublin next year, sometime. It's just that the we need help in putting these on and the group that's putting on this conference can do it, but they need more lead time. So this year at a design leaders conference on November 6th and November 7th, I will be there on November 6th, I'm giving a talk and I'm going to give a talk on Scramble, the new book, the design through a business thriller. And then on November 7th, I'm giving, I think it's a half day workshop on The Brand Flip. So those two things. And then I'm also teaching my course, a brand masterclass. It's a two day course, where you get certified in branding at the starting level. You get a certificate and you can put it in your LinkedIn page and you'd be surprised what it can do for you.

Marty Neumeier: And that's not in Dublin cause we're not ready. Dublin is not ready for us or we're not ready for Dublin. I'm not sure which.

Finola Howard: Do you think you will come to Dublin next year or should we be travelling?

Marty Neumeier: Well, I think you, why wait? You know, I mean we're going to be in Glasgow that's not very far. And in London. So we're also in Lausanne, Switzerland. We're also in Hamburg. So one of those would be good or wait till next year, but the way this is set up, it's the company's level C and it's set up with a five tier

program. So this is the first tier. We're going to roll out one tier per year. You need to pass one course before you get to the next one. And by the time you get to the fifth one, you're going to be ready to be a CBO, Chief Brand Officer or a thought leader in your subject area.

Marty Neumeier: That's the goal for these. And we're not going to get a lot of those people finishing at that level, but we're gonna get a lot of people at the first and second level I think, cause it, just right there, you can really change your fortune with that. We've got people that took the first course that are already getting titles of Chief Brand Officer. We got three already a Chief Brand Officer after one course, not even after the fifth. So there's obviously a hunger out there for people that have actual brand knowledge, very specific brand knowledge and can explain it. And that's what you learn. You learn how to be part of a brand team and you learn how to explain it to bosses and clients and each other. So even at that first-class, we're already getting people doing what the fifth class is supposed to do. So I can only imagine what's going to happen when we get there, but please join us, it's going to be a great time. Well, you know, it'll be a small enough group in any of these where you'll get attention and a chance to be heard and learn and meet some other interesting people.

Finola Howard: Fantastic. Thank you so much for your time, Marty.

Marty Neumeier: Thank you Finola. Bye, everybody.

Finola Howard: Have a great day.