

How to: Brand Architecture

Your guide to portfolio clarity and brand traction



Brand architecture is a framework describing the relationship of a company's various corporate, product and service brands to one another.

This guide was created for B2B leaders who suspect they have a brand architecture issue, and need help assessing and possibly evolving their strategy.



You may have a brand architecture issue if:

- You experienced a merger or acquisition, and your portfolios are overlapping, connecting or competing with each other
- Portfolio changes feel impossible to maneuver
- Naming new products and services is a frustrating task, wasting time and effort
- Customers have a hard time getting what you do (red alert!)



Your architecture is doing just fine if:

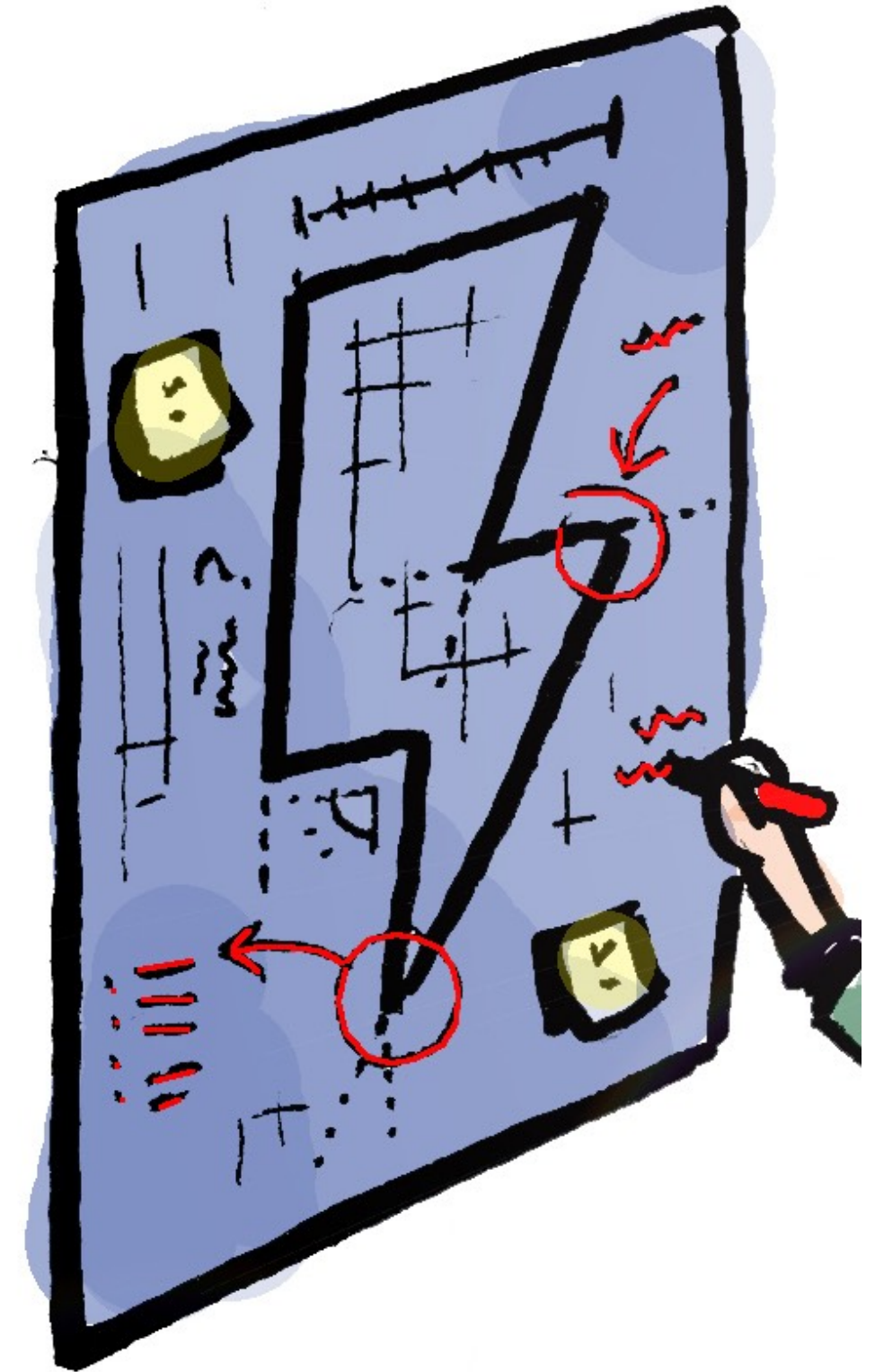


- *It's clear.* Buyers understand the similarities and differences between your offerings, and find it easy to choose accordingly
- *It's simple.* Your sales team and marketing materials have no problem explaining and selling your offering, even if you have a highly technical portfolio
- *It's comprehensive.* Good architecture supports an evolving portfolio of brands, sub-brands and extensions, making it easier to name and launch new products and services
- *It's aligned.* It supports your brand strategy, fits within your overall business strategy and is expected to moving forward

Not you? Keep on reading.

BRAND ARCHITECTURE

Your steps to success





Your steps to success

1. Audit and assess

Get a grip on the current state of affairs with a systemized, comprehensive audit.

2. Choose a framework

Clearly lays out the various company brands and their relationship to one another. Acts as a blueprint for future brand additions.

3. Transition and train

If change is coming, have a plan to roll it out and communicate clearly to all.



1. Audit &
assess

2. Choose a
framework

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& train

Get a grip on the current state of affairs via a comprehensive audit.

A few questions to ask:

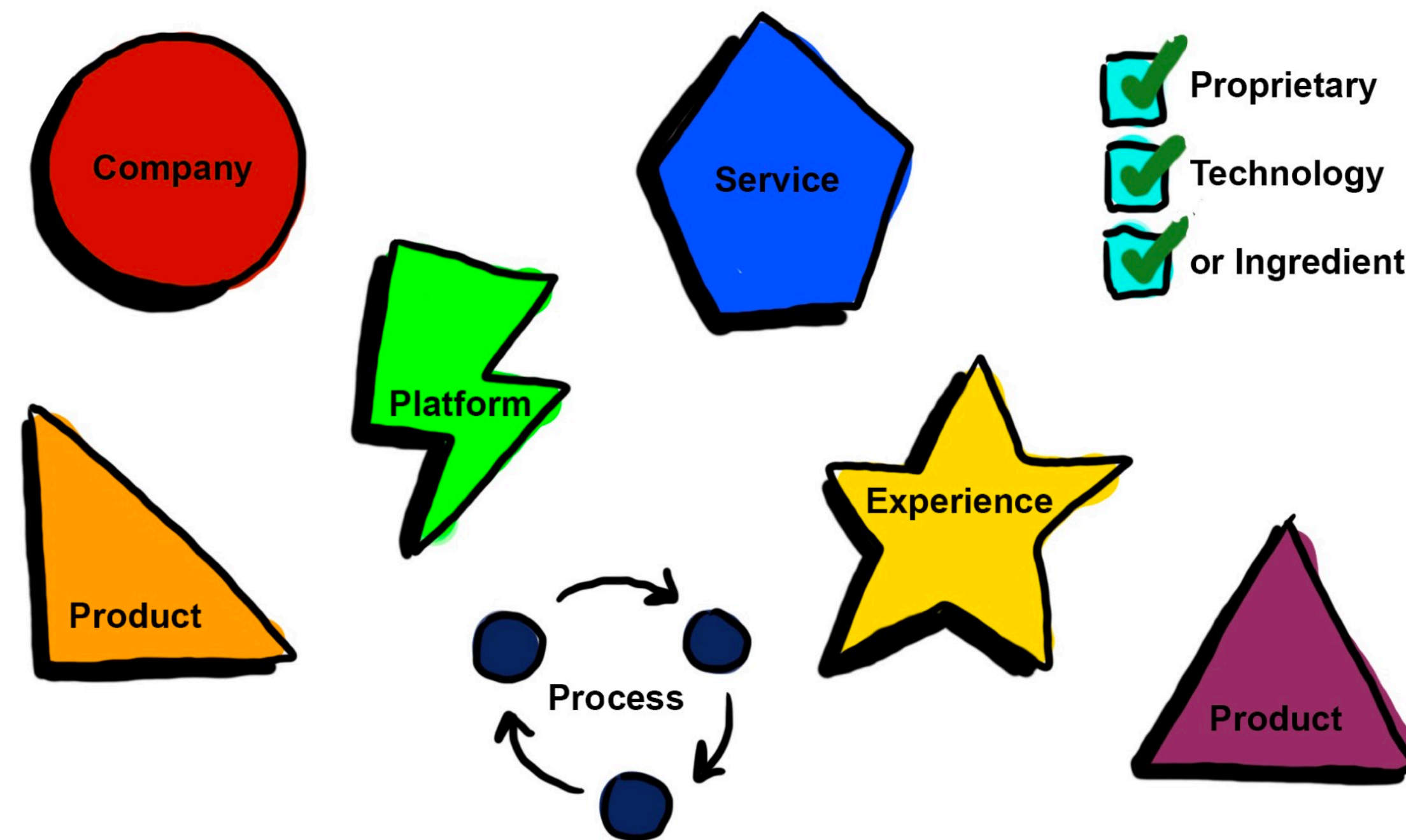
1. What is the full lineup of current external corporate, masterbrands and sub-brands, and how do they relate (or not) to one another?
2. Which brands have valuable equity and strong perception with your customers—or not? (Customer interviews can be a great tool for this stage.)
3. Which brands best contribute to the business? What are the cash cows vs the poor performers?
4. Where do conflicts, overlap, or confusion exist?
5. Does this structure hold up today? Would it support any potential changes that need to be made for the future of your portfolio, company, market?

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Look from the outside in: include all brands your market might see, buy and use.



Do not include: Internal processes, systems or initiatives
Campaigns • Business units • Anything not visible to customers

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Frameworks connect and clarify things.

A brand architecture framework shows the levels of the company brand and their relationship to one another. Here are some of the most common options (many companies create a hybrid).



Masterbrand (aka Branded House)

One parent brand as an umbrella for a wide product range

Maximum consistency, easy and efficient way to build brand equity

All eggs in one basket – may be difficult/expensive to change later



Endorsed Brand (aka Sub-brands)

Individual brands have own identity but use parent brand elements

Leverage parent brand equity while keeping some flexibility

Potentially larger investment to build all brands, connect the dots



Standalone Brand (aka House of Brands)

All brands are independent from company and one another

Create clear, targeted positioning for each category/audience

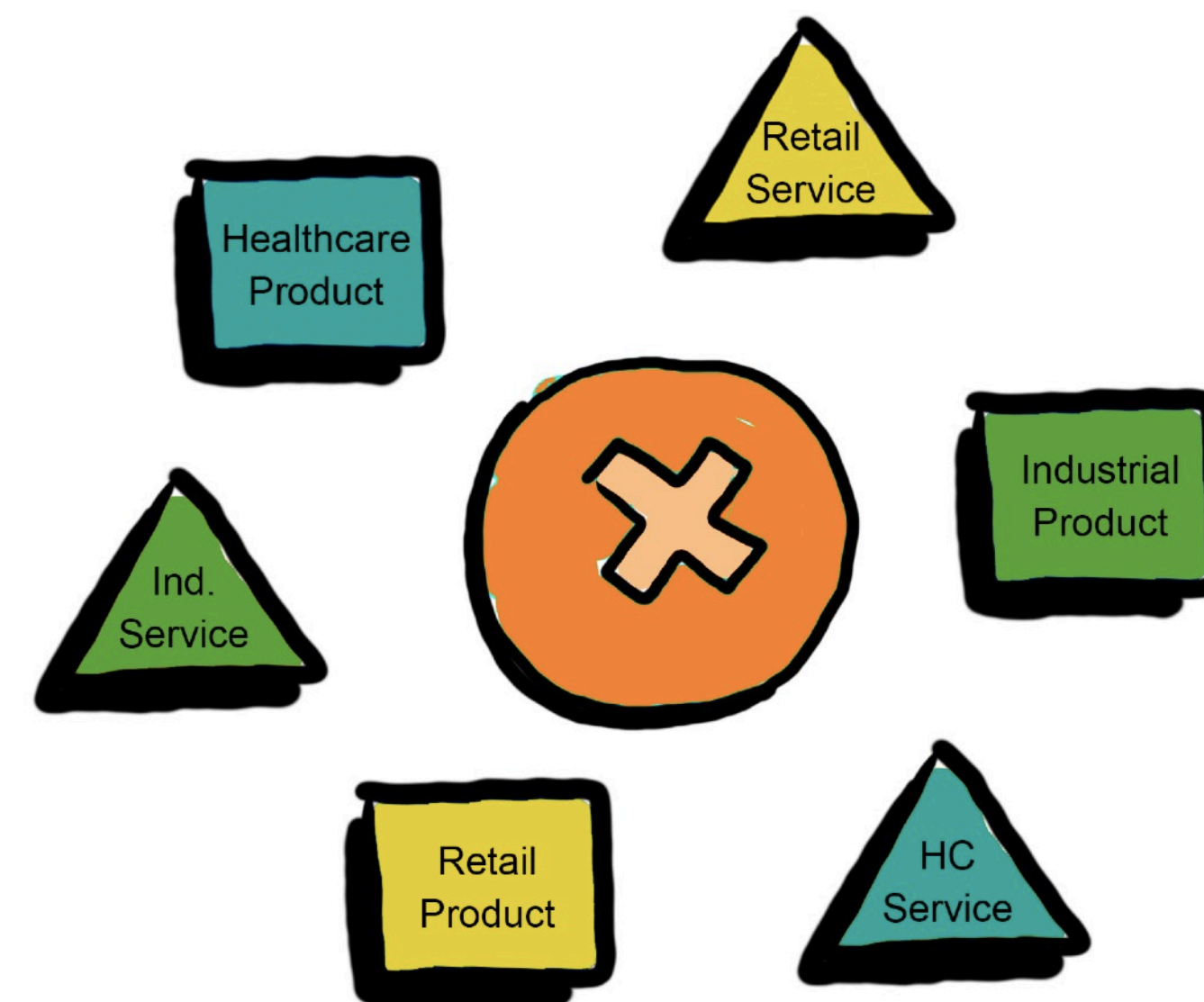
Extra investment and effort to build up and support multiple properties

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Framework example 1

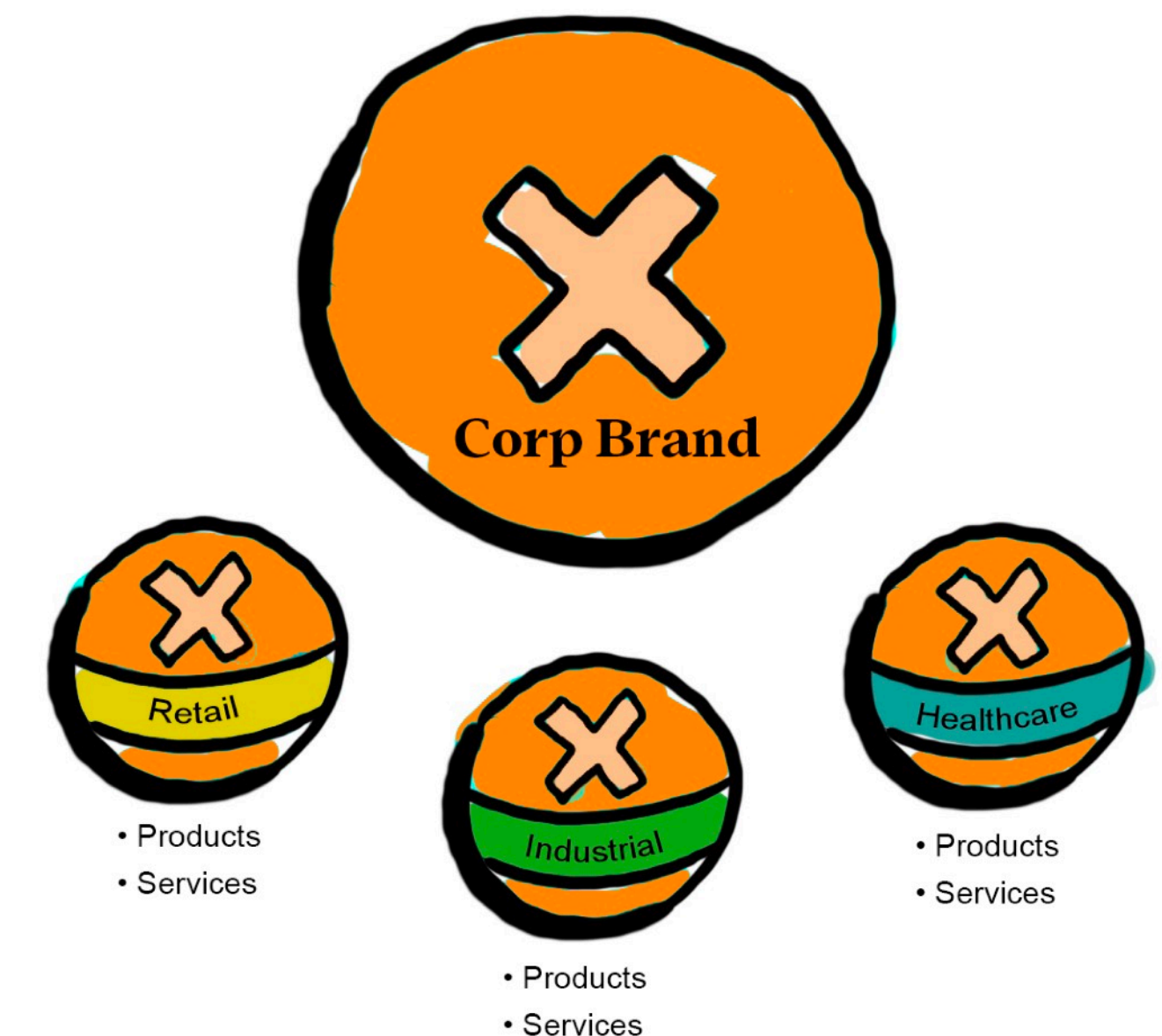
from: Disassociated brand strategy

Company X sells to three unrelated market verticals. Nothing unifies the portfolio, which is a combination of products and services that grew organically over the years.



to: Masterbrand strategy

The new strategy revolves around corporate brand, with offerings organized by vertical. Corporate brand dominates design, offerings communicated mostly in text.



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Framework example 2

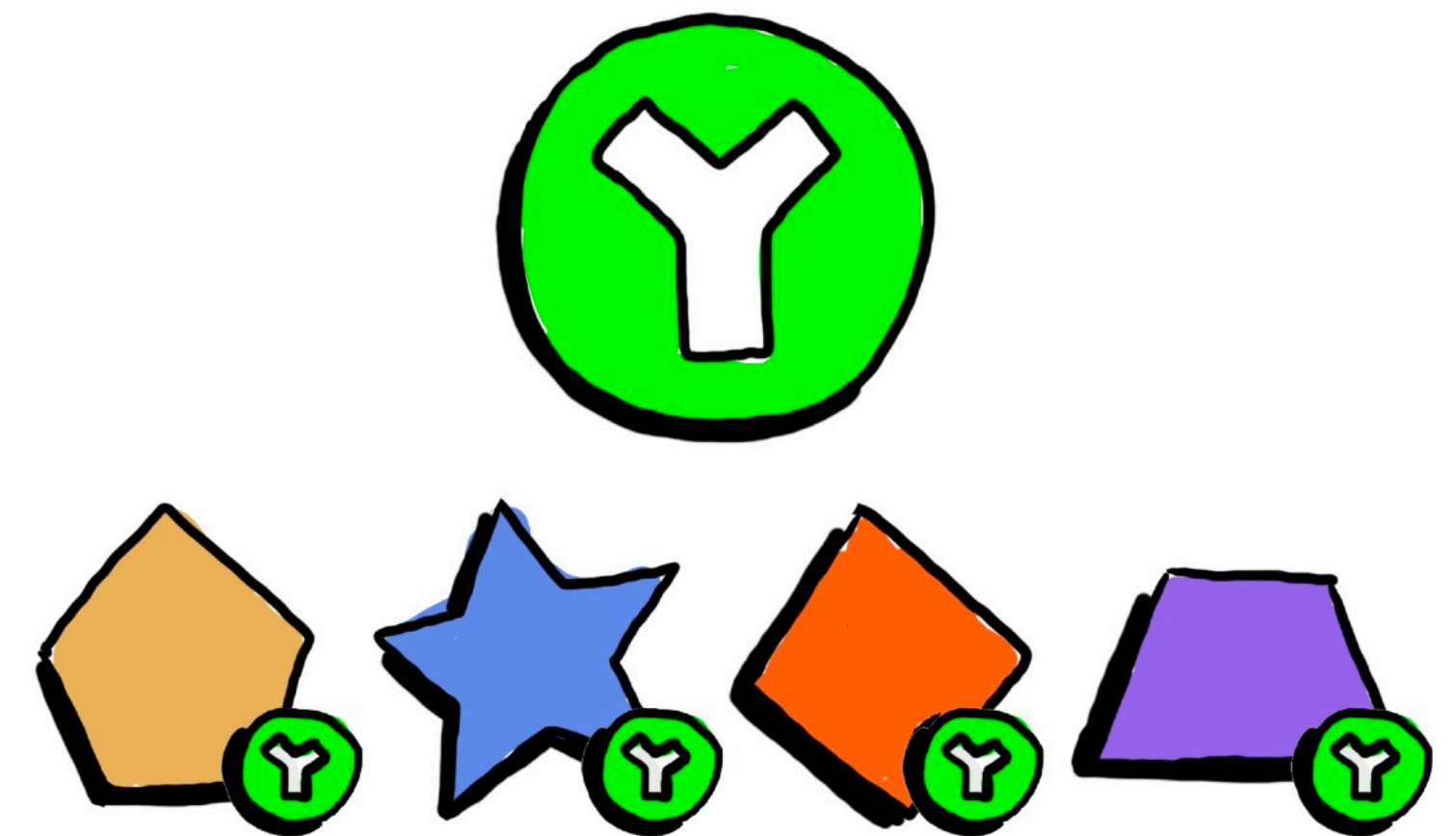
from: House of brands

Over time, Company Y launched many products and services, each with their own distinct brand identity. The resulting portfolio is confusing to navigate and costly to maintain.



to: Endorsed brand

To clarify the offering but retain the equity in sub-brands, the company transitioned to an endorsed brand strategy. In the process, two poorly performing brands were eliminated, thus simplifying the portfolio.

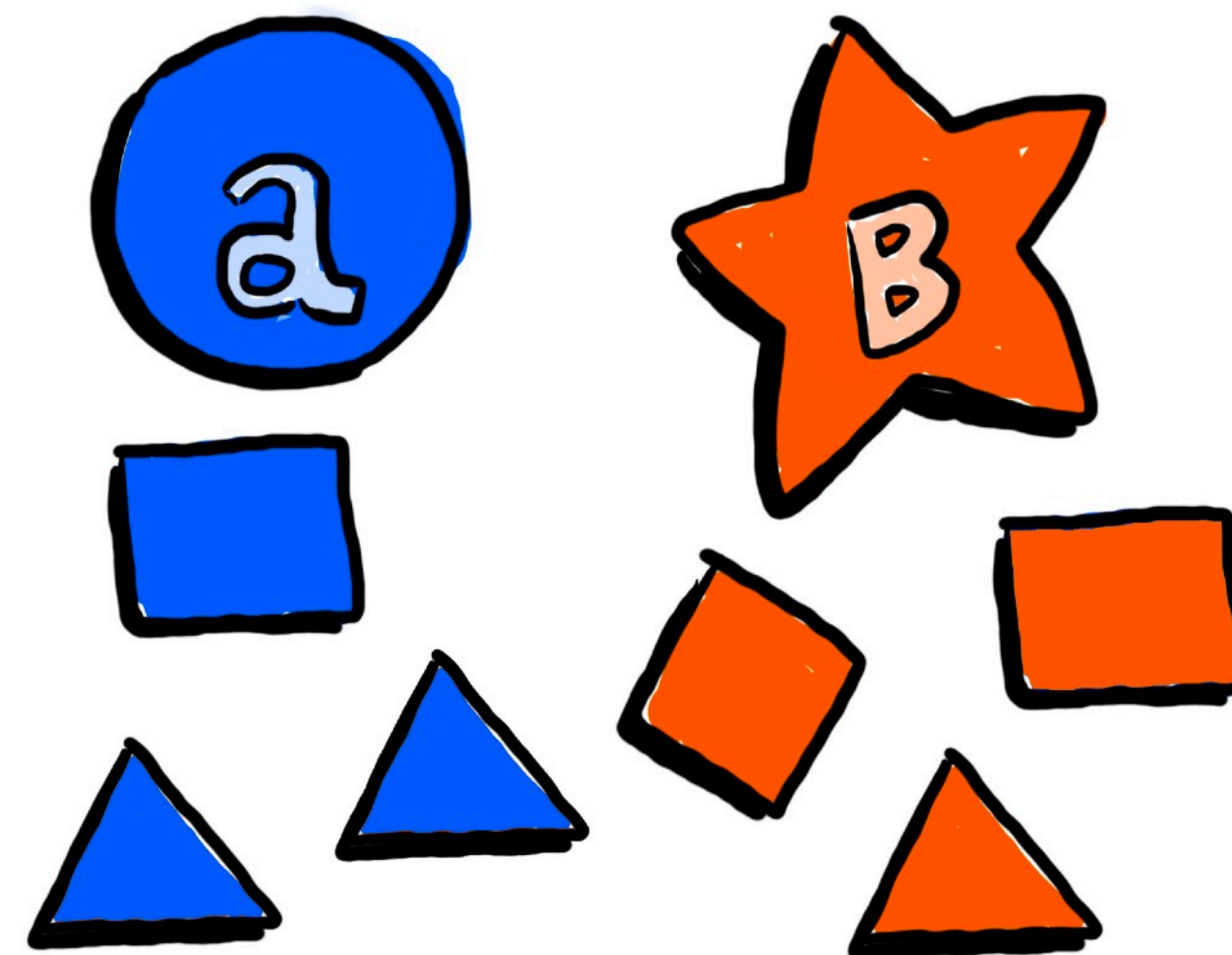


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Framework example 3

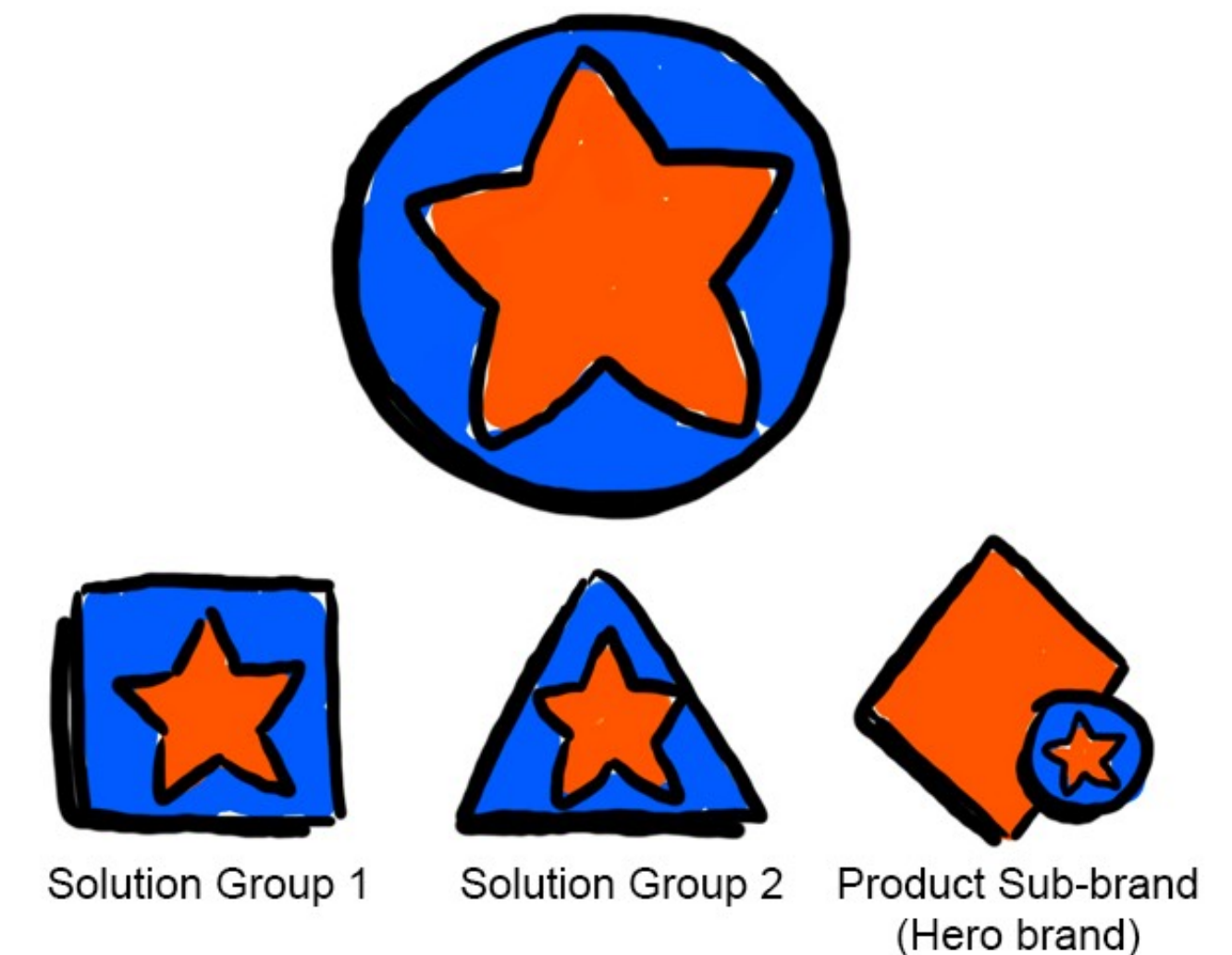
from: Disjointed (post-acquisition)

Company A acquired Company B. They serve the same market but have different offerings; want to leverage the expanded portfolio by presenting their offerings as a full solution.



to: Hybrid architecture

New corporate brand nods to both entities. Most sub-brands reference corporate brand as in a masterbrand strategy; one offering retains its own brand with corp endorsement line, due to strong equity (AKA a “Hero Brand”).



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Choose a framework that works for you.

Your framework will act as a blueprint for future brand additions, including rules for naming. As you decide, ask:

1. What's your company's overarching brand strategy? Does it fit best with a branded house, house of brands, endorsed brands, or some hybrid/alternative?
2. What are the organizing principles of your framework—market type, target audience, geography, price point, other? How many verticals and levels?
3. Will there be differences between global and regional brands?
4. What type of naming strategy will increase understanding to our markets? What will be the rules for naming now and in the future?

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If change is needed, make a plan for the transition and communicate it well.

If it's time for a change, a clear transition makes all the difference between clarifying and complicating your offerings. Consider:

1. Will this be a “light switch” changeover or a slow evolution? If the latter, what are the stages in between today and the future state?
2. How will you communicate the change to external and internal stakeholders?
3. How does this impact your current customers, and what should be communicated to them (if anything)?
4. How will you train and equip your sales and marketing team to be able to clearly communicate your offerings?
5. What needs to be converted: SKUs, package design, pitch decks, website, email addresses? Does anything change with how people buy from you?

Got a brand architecture issue? If your portfolio creates any confusion or conflict, it may be time to clean it up and plan for long-term.

Your three steps to success:

1. Audit and assess
2. Choose a framework
3. Transition and train

Your future self thanks you.

Want more help? Bluegreen offers workshops and brand strategy engagements for entrepreneurial B2B companies. Drop us a line sometime.

