

THE FRONT

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NetApp is a leading vendor of innovative storage and data management solutions that helps organizations around the world store, manage, protect, and retain their data.

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TECHNOLOGY BRANDING

A JOURNAL OF BRANDING
AND DESIGN ISSUES

MANAGING A BRANDING PROGRAM CAN FEEL LIKE A CINEMATIC DRAMA OF SORTS, COMPLETE WITH PLOT TWISTS AND A BEVY OF CHARACTERS WHO EACH HAVE THEIR OWN AGENDA. THIS IS THE STORY OF HOW **NETAPP** SCRIPTED ITS OWN HAPPY ENDING.

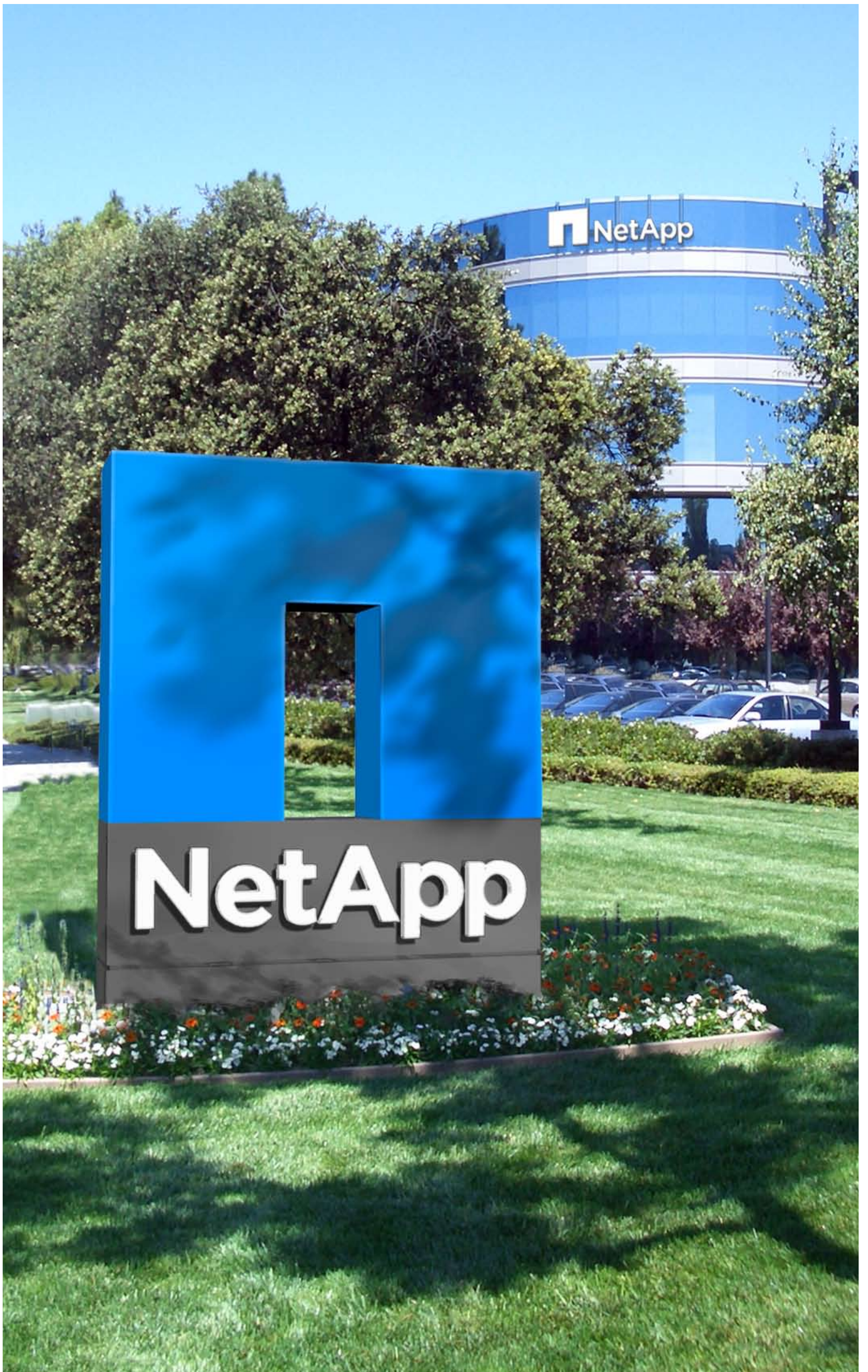


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Go further, faster

NetApp is a leading vendor of innovative storage and data management solutions that helps organizations around the world store, manage, protect, and retain their data. Headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, NetApp is a member of the NASDAQ-100 and ranks on the Fortune 1000.

Landor recommended the formal adoption of the corporate name NetApp, which had already been coined by consumers at the shortened version of Network Appliance. Then Landor developed and built a completely new identity system around the name. A warmer visual identity and photo style was introduced to reinforce the company's desire for greater interactivity. Landor created fresh messaging, including a new tagline, to be more responsive to NetApp's strategic and technical audiences. The system builds on NetApp's equities while providing a platform for NetApp and its partners to seize new growth opportunities.





FEATURE

NOW SHOWING: BUILDING THE CASE FOR BRAND

Deborah Crudo/Executive Director
Landor San Francisco

Scripting the new NetApp brand

When Elisa Steele, Senior VP, corporate marketing, joined NetApp in 2005, the company had already surmounted its first major hurdle: breaking the \$1B revenue mark. But that accomplishment was just a prequel to the much bolder plans NetApp would undertake over the course of the next few years. By 2007 it was a \$3B company with plans to keep growing and claim the number two market share slot, behind industry giant EMC.

In order to achieve those goals, NetApp needed to broaden its position within the marketplace. Third-party qualitative and quantitative research indicated that the company's existing customers were loyal and passionate NetApp advocates. However, among the general market place there was a lack of awareness of the NetApp brand and the company's capabilities. Cofounder Dave Hitz, who wrote the NetApp "Future History" paper to vision out the company's next steps,

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A behind-the-scenes look into the making of NetApp's global brand initiative

Movie plots typically follow a standard arc-of-change: back-story, conflict, surmounting the conflict, and dénouement. Most of the time we can guess where the hero will ultimately arrive. What we really want to know is how they'll succeed in getting there. Do they recruit a plucky sidekick? Starve out the enemy or charge the castle gates? In other words: What are the success factors that lead the hero to a happy ending?

Managing a branding program can feel like a cinematic drama of sorts, complete with plot twists and a bevy of characters who each have their own agenda. A happy ending—in the form of a successful brand implementation—is certainly not a given. In fact, many branding programs meet an untimely end because internal challenges, such as funding, skepticism, and resistance to change, are not addressed early in the process. To make matters worse, success factors like internal education and evangelism are too often assigned bit-parts instead of starring roles.

Despite potential hurdles like these, countless organizations do successfully manage a branding initiative through to full implementation. But a select few do it exceptionally—avoiding many of the clichéd dramatic conflicts along the way. Just recently, storage and data management company NetApp did just that when it launched a comprehensive branding program intended to achieve broader and deeper awareness in the marketplace.

NetApp's success demonstrates that the branding programs most likely to reach a happy ending are those that both anticipate internal obstacles and identify success factors way before the opening title sequence starts to roll. That is why NetApp's story is a "must-see" for any organization contemplating a branding initiative.

recognized that growing its customer base would require more than just continued product innovation. In fact, he identifies "a better understanding of NetApp today" as the goal second only to achieving the next revenue milestone. Even more, "increased brand awareness" is included as one of the five strategic themes designed to support continued company growth.

To help evolve NetApp to a top player in the storage and data management category, the company committed to a major brand initiative, the likes of which it had never undertaken. Tasked with leading the charge, Steele identified key stakeholders with cross-functional expertise who could contribute to the development of the new brand strategy. And the transformation process was set in motion. Top branding agency experts were retained. Internal teams were identified. Strategy was developed. New audiences were studied. Messages were retooled. A brand platform was created and translated into visual and verbal expressions of NetApp. The brand launched internally on March 3 and externally at NetApp Analyst Day, March 11, 2008. A happy ending was had by all.

Simple, right? Wrong. Steele and her team worked diligently and deliberately over a 14-month period to gain support for the branding initiative and steer it through the organization. This was not an easy task given NetApp's engineering culture.

This critical process of securing internal buy-in is where many organizations struggle, often because they simply did not anticipate and plan for it. Here's what NetApp did right and why its approach serves as a best-practice case for the internal management of a branding program.

Success Factors for a Happy Ending: In order of appearance

01 Vision. Guided by Hitz's "Future History," Steele knew where NetApp needed to go and who it needed to beat in order to transcend its current position in the marketplace. That clarity of vision kept the brand strategy development process on track and facilitated decision making. For her part, Steele was guided by an understanding that the branding initiative's success depended on her team's ability to communicate the link between NetApp's brand strategy and its growth objectives.

02 A strong team. Even before any internal conversations about the brand initiative took place, Steele was given a challenge to build a robust marketing strategy and team. This changed the relationship between marketing and sales in significant and positive ways. Marketing took on a more proactive role that went beyond just providing sales with collateral—they were increasing the level of interest, delivering actual sales opportunities, and impacting pipeline within the field. Empowered in this way, the marketing team was poised to lead the brand initiative when the time was right. Additionally, once the branding program





commenced, it was appropriately staffed by a brand task force of more than 25 key internal stakeholders. This inclusive, cross-functional group was involved early in the process and represented marketing, sales, business units, HR, IT, workplace resources, and more.

03 Patience and persistence. Steele was wise to keep in mind that creating a brand is not like flipping a switch, in part because so many internal stakeholders are involved. The most critical stakeholder set is often senior leadership, which can make or break a branding program, so securing their support is essential to success. Steele had to anticipate and proactively address a number of internal objections, from budget issues and attachment to the original Network Appliance brand, to skepticism around the value of brand building. To overcome these potential obstacles, Steele and her team struck a shifting balance between patience and persistence. They approached the branding program as a (long) journey rather than a destination. They also thought in terms of how they could make it easy for the executive team to join the ride. One-on-one meetings and strategic alliance building secured brand buy-in well in advance of major decision points.

04 Education and communication. The single most important factor in securing company buy-in for a branding program is often education. Fortunately, Steele started by educating herself and her team before approaching senior management. That meant commissioning third-party research and allowing the findings to guide the scope of the branding program. The results indicated that NetApp had two immediate tasks: expand its target audience to now include strategic management as well as technical staff, and recraft its verbal and visual expression so it could connect with both audiences. With these two goals identified, the marketing team remained focused on the important first phase of the program: research and strategy development. Conversations about the name and identity were not broached until later in the process. Rather, the marketing team made it a priority to educate the executive team by sharing with them the brand awareness and customer experience insights. Ultimately, those research findings played a significant role in catalyzing the executive team and helping them understand how brand could help transform the business. Through continuous training, communications and evangelism, the marketing team got the company

on board. NetApp's branding initiative success story is not new. Neither are the internal obstacles that came with it. What makes the NetApp story compelling—what makes it a blockbuster hit instead of a B-movie—is the approach the marketing team took to successfully steer the branding program through the organization. They anticipated. They were deliberate. They were proactive.

And NetApp's happy ending did not actually end when the new brand was unveiled on Analyst Day. After all, tangible business results are the only good reason any organization would undertake a branding program—and that kind of ROI takes time to manifest. But the NetApp of today is far better equipped to raise its brand awareness and to achieve its revenue goals. Which is to say: Stay tuned for a killer sequel.

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