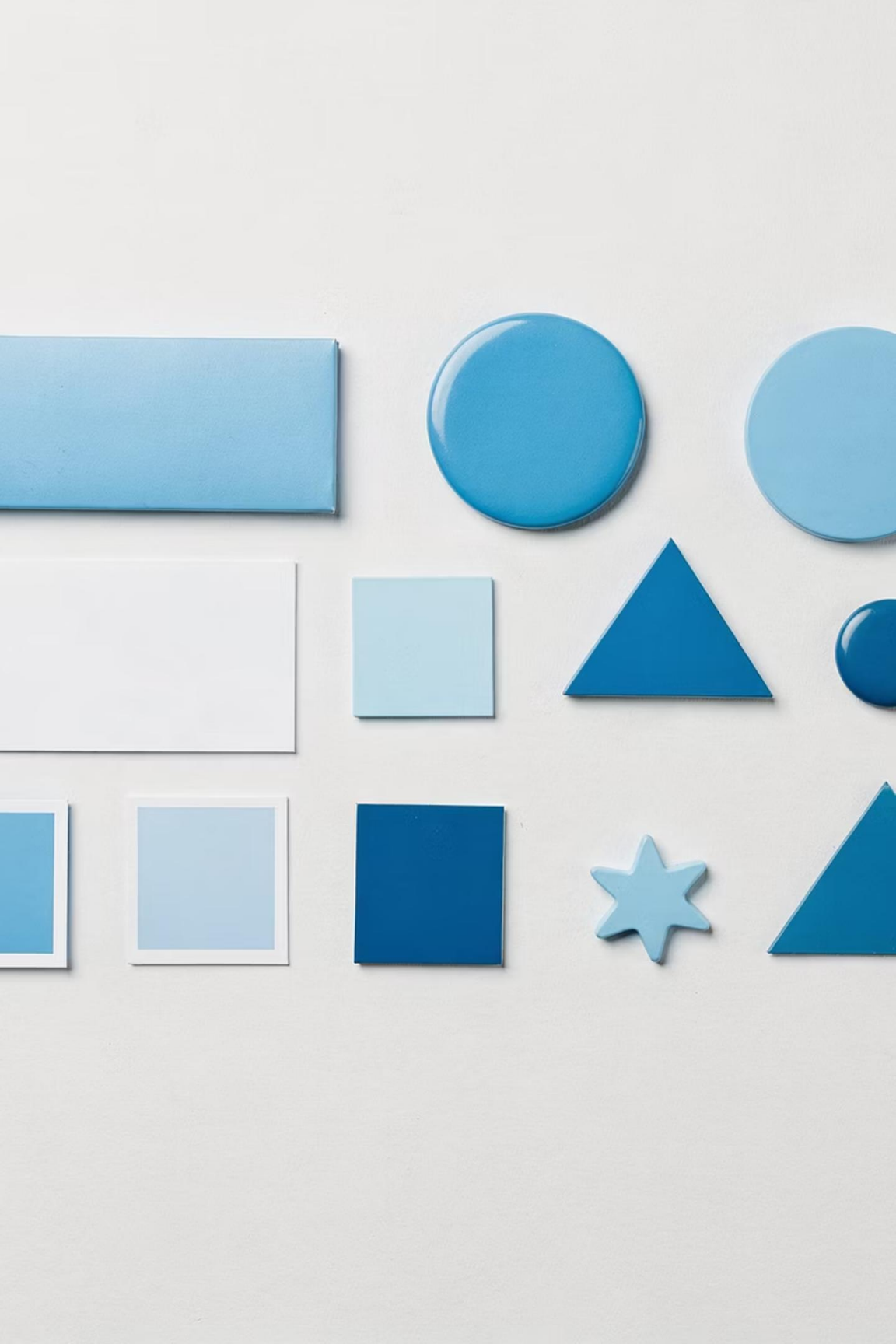




The 5 Elements of Distinct Brands

*Adapted from **Iconic** by Scott McKain*



Optimize

Strategy • Alignment • Scalability

Building a Distinct Brand



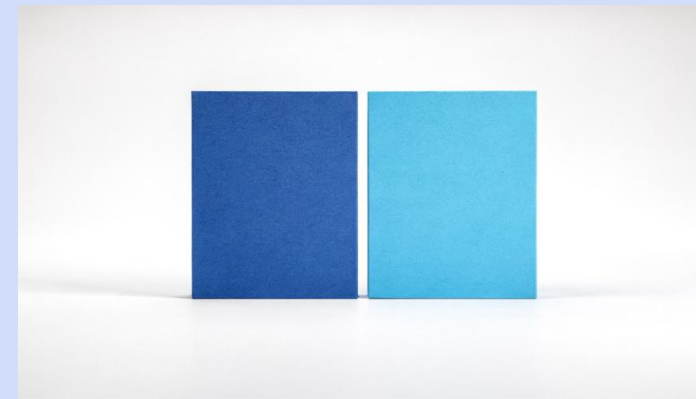
Promise

What do we deliver every time?



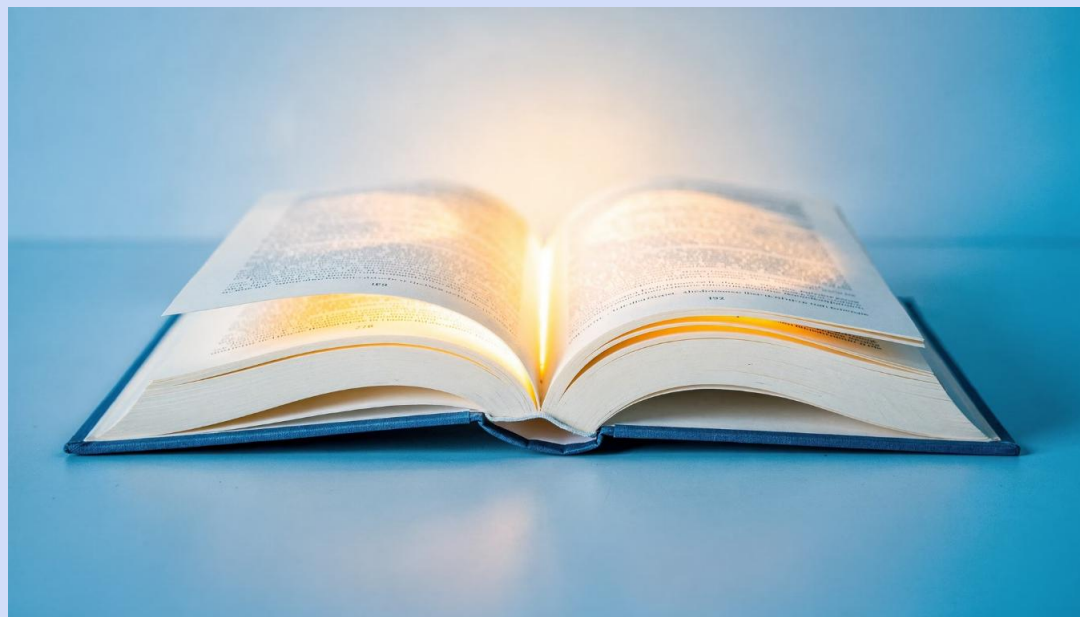
Clarity

Who are we, and who are we not?



Contrast

How does your product or business model differ?



Narrative

What stories do we tell?



Customer Journey

How do we create experiences so awesome that customers will tell their friends?



ELEMENT 1

Promise

What do we deliver **every time**? A brand's promise is the consistent commitment it makes to its customers – the reliable outcome they can count on with every interaction, product, or service.

- ❏ **B2C Example:** Apple's promise is "beautifully simple technology that just works" – every product, from the iPhone to the MacBook, delivers on this consistently.
- ❏ **B2B Example:** Salesforce promises to be the single source of truth for customer relationships – every product in their ecosystem reinforces the idea that no deal, customer, or conversation will fall through the cracks.

Clarity

Who are we, and who are we not? Clarity means knowing your identity with precision – understanding your strengths, your audience, and equally important, what you choose not to be. Clarity eliminates confusion and builds trust.

- ❏ **B2C Example:** In-N-Out Burger has a menu of just 4 items. They know exactly what they are – a fresh, simple, quality burger joint – and they've never tried to be anything else.
- ❏ **B2B Example:** Slack is clear about what it is – a messaging tool for teams – and what it's not: a project manager, a CRM, or an email replacement. That focus is why it integrates so well with everything else.



Contrast

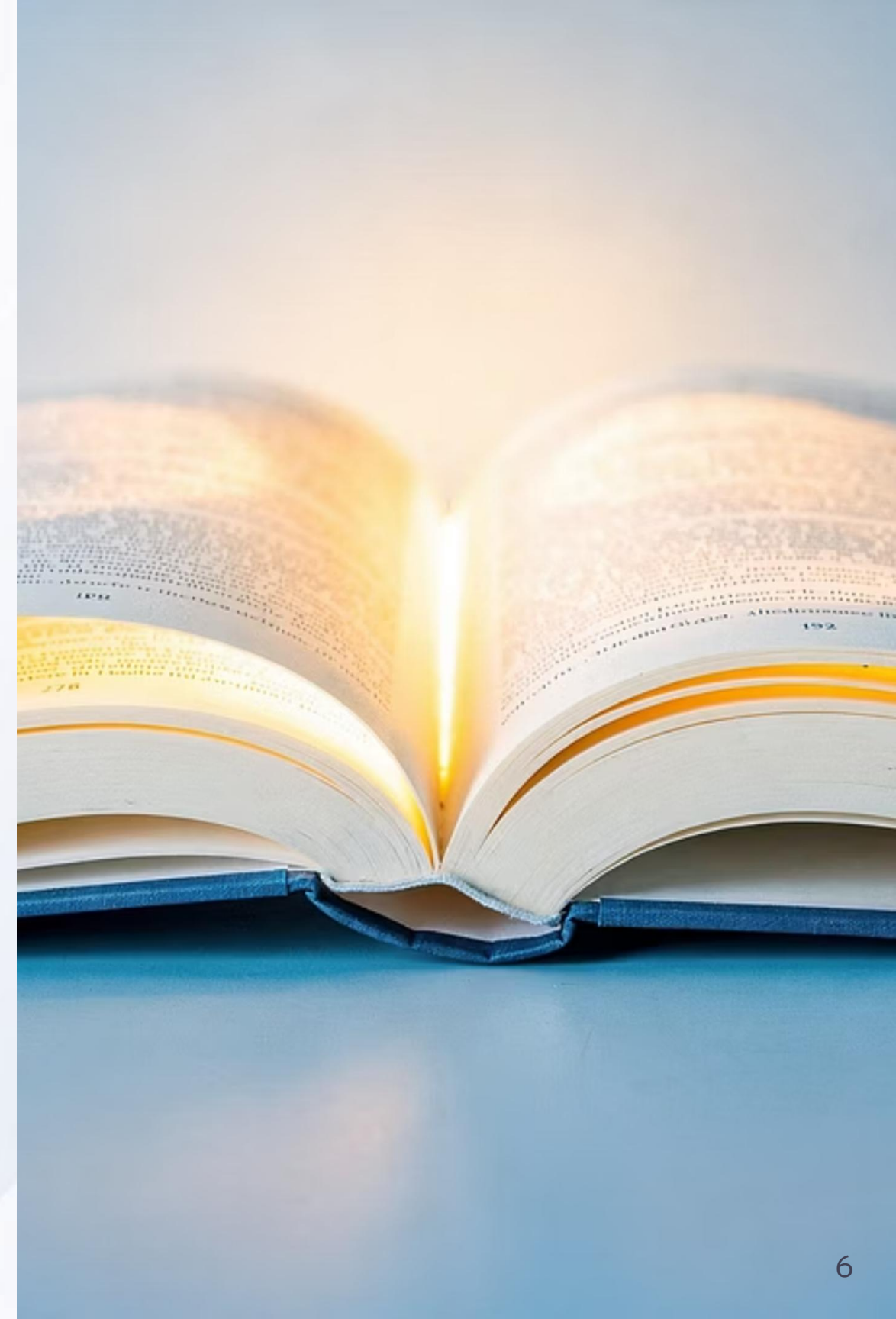
How does your product or business model differ? Contrast is what sets you apart from the competition. Distinct brands don't blend in – they stand out by offering something meaningfully different in how they operate, what they offer, or how they show up.

- ❏ **B2C Example:** Dollar Shave Club disrupted the razor industry not with a better blade, but with a radically different model – direct-to-door delivery and irreverent humor that made Gillette look stiff and overpriced.
- ❏ **B2B Example:** Zoom stood out against WebEx and GoToMeeting by doing one thing differently – it just worked, every time, with no IT setup required. That frictionless experience was the contrast that won enterprise deals.

Narrative

What stories do we tell? Narrative is the art of communicating your brand through compelling stories – stories that connect emotionally, reflect your values, and make your promise and contrast come alive in the minds of your customers.

- ❏ **B2C Example:** Nike doesn't just sell shoes – they tell stories of perseverance and athletic greatness. "Just Do It" isn't a tagline, it's a narrative that connects millions of people to their own ambitions.
- ❏ **B2B Example:** HubSpot built its brand on the narrative of 'inbound marketing' – a story that positioned cold-calling and interruptive ads as the villain, and helpful content as the hero. That story made them a movement, not just a software company.



Customer Journey

How do we create experiences so awesome that customers will tell their friends?
The customer journey is about designing every touchpoint to be remarkable – turning satisfied customers into enthusiastic advocates who spread your brand organically.

- ❏ **B2C Example:** Cheesecake Factory is famous for its over-the-top menu and generous portions – customers don't just eat there, they talk about it. That word-of-mouth experience is engineered into every visit.
- ❏ **B2B Example:** Ritz-Carlton's service model has been studied and adopted by companies like Stryker Medical – their legendary employee empowerment (\$2,000 per guest to resolve any issue) creates stories that clients and partners retell for years.

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