

5 features of grit for every brand

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

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John Wayne once said: "True grit is making a decision and standing by it, doing what must be done. No moral man can have peace of mind in what he leaves undone what he knows he should have done."



John Wayne in *True Grit*. Image credit: [The Guardian](#).

In my years of hosting my podcast, *The Carmen Murray Show*, I interviewed a wide range of alchemist, newsmakers and celebrities and they all seem to have one thing in common: They stand for something far bigger than themselves and apply true grit as a discipline that always seems to take the centre stage.



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I am curious to understand how this idea applies to brands.

I approached Prof. Ilse Struweg from the University of Johannesburg's (UJ) department of marketing management to share her insights how **grit** can be applied as a discipline to be a guiding force to get your business future fit.

Grit for brands

Let's be honest, grit is not a new concept. This much-hyped ingredient for achieving personal success has been popularised in education, psychology, leadership and HR context.

It reached renewed attention through Angela Duckworth's 2016 book *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance* – still on the New York Times' Bestsellers list since its publication.

Very little research or opinion pieces appear to have considered grit in the broader context of marketing. The existing few have angled it from a salesperson perspective, only some in retail and, of course, a rare attempt to apply grit from a consumer outlook.

So, the question is: ***Can grit be relevant to the discipline of branding?***



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Grit is the passion and sustained persistence applied toward long-term achievement. If looked at Duckworth's grit definition, surely it can be applied to brands – think anthropomorphism and Aaker's brand personality ideas where brands are humanised, making brands human-like and connecting it with consumers who have congruent characteristics with that brand.

Grit has hundreds of fine distinctions and many incongruities. At times, grit can be stronger and, every so often, weaker – exactly the same as the lifecycles of brands. The constancy of a brand's tenacity is based on the degree it can reclaim, awaken and direct itself.

The five most significant features of grit are courage, conscientiousness, resilience and excellence. Grit for brands could then include the following, based on these distinct features.

Courage

Sure, very few if any brand these days can afford a mistake, but some brands do get it right in embracing mistakes; what others would see as 'failure'. A brand with grit understands that there are constructive lessons in setbacks, that the courage to stay tenacious is indispensable for a high achieving, memorable brand.



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The key is to manage the symbiotic relationship between courage and grit – feeding into and off of each other, but, more importantly, brands need to manage both courage and grit and how they are functioning together. If the brand exercises courage as part of its DNA, it will grow and if it is ignored, it will weaken.

Conscientiousness

There are some differences of opinion when it comes to the nuances in interpreting conscientiousness in grit. Without getting into these nuances here, if grit is applied to brands, it means that brands need to commit to going for gold each and

every time in each and every touchpoint, rather than merely showing up.

Perseverance

Again, there are many conflicting views on what exactly is meant by perseverance in the context of grit.

But without going into the intricate deliberations, the key take-out is this: Long-term goals provide brands context and a framework in which to find meaning and value for those long-term efforts.

“ Guts and grit, otherwise known as persistence. Do you have it? <https://t.co/IE4Z6Y2lek>.

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[#startups #startup #entrepreneur #tech #business #marketing #fintech #entrepreneurs #innovation #support #blockchain #socialmedia #digitalmarketing #founder ... https://t.co/QNEsqTZuEC pic.twitter.com/fOxf8SeT7m](#)

— RealTaskUnicom (@RealTaskUnicom) [April 17, 2019](#) ”

Thus, a brand just spending a lot of time doing something will only be distinguished if what the brand does have purpose.

Resilience

In the face of disruption, brands should have a good dose of stamina.

For Andrew Zollie and Ann Marie Healy, in their book *Resilience, how things bounce back*, resilience is the dynamic combination of three things: optimism, creativity and confidence – together enabling a person, company or system to reappraise situations and regulate emotions.

Something they also call ‘hardiness’. Thus, brands need to have a meaningful impact on their environments and stakeholders and learn and grow from both positive and negative experiences in building their stamina.

Excellence

While one’s initial instinct is that brands need perfection in every touchpoint, it is virtually impossible.

Where perfection focuses on the result of the brand’s efforts, excellence is more concerned with the notion of fulfilment of purpose or function. For brands, it is the ongoing quest for improvement and progress.

These characteristics of grit can obviously assist you in your personal and professional life as a marketer, but one could argue that, over time, grit is what will also separate successful, goal-driven brands from brands without agility, passion or purpose.

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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