1 BRIAN MANSFIELD
MANAGING DIRECTOR, BLUE MARLIN BRAND DESIGN

In a brilliant recent article in London's *Financial Times*, 'The Strange Death of Modern Advertising', Maurice Saatchi stressed that in our media-diffracted, information-overloaded age brands must strive to build equity in a single word. "Each brand can only own one word. Each word can only be owned by one brand." So what is Myer's word? What equity can it own? What market space can it defend? What brand truth can it let shine through from within?

In the Australian retail space, David Jones unquestionably owns 'fashion' – to attempt a derivative of this positioning would be folly on the part of Myer, which has not been as single-minded as DJs in its brand-building of recent years.

Myer needs to build on its greater warmth and intimacy and its 'My Store' tag line and find a true connection with the audiences it serves. It's not too late, but it is too late to do nothing.

I'd recommend the same three-stage process we use whenever we're engaged to articulate the truth behind the corporate brands we work on. Immerse. Articulate. Implement.

Engage key stakeholders – the 20,000-plus employees, owners, customers and suppliers of Myer in expressing their take on Myer's key equities. They already know the answer; you just have to tease it out of them.

Distil these equities down to a paragraph, then a sentence and finally the single brand idea or word that they alone can own.

Aggressively drive this single-minded brand idea into every aspect of the business.

While imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, no girl likes to arrive at the party to find someone else wearing her dress – there's plenty of space for Myer to find its own unique brand wardrobe in the Australian retail environment, and plenty of potential equities for it to elevate to 'ownable' status. **M**

2 JEREMY CREIGHTON
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND PARTNER, PASSPORT DESIGN

I think Myer is in a great place to redefine the shopping experience for Australians. Not only in its appearance, but in the way it interacts with its shoppers. For example, Myer could unveil its new online store, open 24 hours Australia-wide. Like Google, Myer could become our shoppers' search engine to the world's best music, food and culture from fashion to homewares. This could then grow with the Generation Xs, as they gain greater spending power, offering fashion updates and interviews with Australian designers, musicians and writers. Myer could send fashion sales and updates on the web or straight to your phones.

I think Australia has some amazing creative influences. It would be great to have a department store that supports this on all levels. Myer could focus on representing a sense of realness through a relaxed environment, which is vibrant with colours and textures, in a move away from the formal marble and gold fitouts. Myer could move into spaces that reflect modern Australian architecture, inviting us to interact with each other and the space around us. Like Federation Square, Myer could use in-store displays to connect the in-store experience with the outside world.

It would make sense for Myer to build a reliable and honest brand that captures the hearts of the middle income earner, making the competition seem simply overpriced or just cheap.

Myer is an iconic Australian brand and I think it is important to nurture these brands to help shape the personality of our cities and capture our uniqueness, instead of becoming just another shopping mall. In this evolving environment Myer might need to take brave steps forward if it's to associate itself with Australia's progressive culture and the fashion industry. **M**

3 LORRAINE JOKOVIC
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, LOUD

It's never too late to revive an iconic brand like Myer. It's a big job, however, and it requires a large investment. The first step is to ensure there's the commitment from the new owners, and from the board.

The process for developing a new positioning for such a brand is far more structured than just emulating another successful brand's positioning, such as in the case of David Jones. Myer needs to begin the process by outlining its business objectives and being able to answer the following questions:

What are Myer's business objectives for the short- and medium-terms?

What business model is it going to continue with in the market?

Where does it sit in the competitive set?

What are its growth objectives?

What learnings can be drawn from the international market?

What is the consumer's current understanding of the brand?

Where are the gaps between its current market positioning and its growth plans?

What can be leveraged from the current brand and what attributes need to be introduced to move the brand's position to where it needs to be?

Only when this is understood, should it begin to develop a relevant brand strategy and positioning.

It seems a single-minded fashion positioning is popular and, in my view, to replicate it would probably be a mistake. Myer needs to find its own unique identity, one that's truly meaningful to its current and prospective customers. One that gets people in the stores and buying. **M**

TQUESTION: WHAT STEPS SHOULD MYER'S NEW OWNERS TAKE TO REVIVE THE BRAND OF ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST RETAILERS? SHOULD THEY ATTEMPT TO MUSCLE IN ON DAVID JONES' SUCCESSFUL FASHION POSITIONING OR FOLLOW A DIFFERENT PATH? IS IT TOO LATE FOR MYER?

4 CHRIS GRANNELL

BRAND AND MARKETING STRATEGIST, SWAT>MARKETING

There are 60 Myer stores spread right across the country compared to 37 David Jones stores geared towards wealthy inner-urban locations. As long as the balance remains tipped in this way, DJs will always have a degree of scarcity and exclusivity on its side, and Myer will always play a greater role within the more price-sensitive mainstream.

We have seen much discussion about the potential for Myer to move 'upmarket'; usually accompanied by the observation that a mainstream brand will struggle in the top end, which DJs now dominates. The solution is likely to come in the form of a hybrid model, and in future we should expect to see different tiers of Myer stores – emporiums perhaps restored to former glory, or suburban stores freed to focus on locally-relevant product. The lack of competitor department store chains in Australia may narrow our thinking. But there are many international examples (Debenhams, BHS, Stockmann) where department stores have worked on multiple-levels. Other clues to the future may come from the positioning of Target, Kmart and the larger fashion and homewares chains.

Obviously there's a limit to the stretch that can be achieved under a single brand, so it's quite conceivable that we might see another brand or diffusion line being introduced to cover concessions where the Myer brand is no longer suitable. Myer's Generation Y-oriented Basement concession is an example of this approach already in action.

With a footprint almost twice the size, Myer simply can't be David Jones. Nor should it try to be. The relative success of DJ is seductive. But it would be a mistake to assume that Myer is compelled to pursue the same positioning. Ultimately, the successful Myer brand strategy will be one that explains why it it's not like David Jones, and why it doesn't need to be.**M**

5 SIMON BAGGS

CEO, LATERAL MARKETING & MANAGEMENT

Perhaps it is the Sydney vs Melbourne thing but I adopted an underlying anti-Myer stance when they re-branded Grace Bros in 2004. I have no problem shopping at Myer in Melbourne but in Sydney I feel it is somehow wrong. I had not examined this subconscious aversion to Myer until now, and it confuses me because I never really had any special relationship with the Grace Bros brand. Perhaps there is something in all that brand equity stuff after all.

DJs has done what it does best and taken the fashion banner and marched into battle with Megan Gale playing the role of Joan of Arc. DJ's fashion events are magnificent, full scale, no expense spared affairs.

But each year Myer takes to the field and in August last year they had a major triumph by showcasing their spring and summer fashions to 16,000 people at a giant mock beach fashioned from 7 cubic meters of sand dumped in Martin Place in Sydney's CBD.

Myer's core business might be more mainstream fashion but the show itself and the designers featured, was high fashion and high theatre. Some thought it was the best fashion show they had ever seen – but did it make them want to go into Myer and buy the gear? "Oh God, Yes" said one convert. Another proof that events are a powerful and effective tool in the marketing mix.

The fashion war between David Jones and Myer brings vitality to both brands. It would be a great shame if Myer were to withdraw and leave David Jones as the sole custodian of department store high fashion.

Myer is known for good levels of service and for selling the widest range of goods. Hopefully, Myer will invest in the long term, retain service levels and let everyone else's standards slip, resulting in Myer gaining new customers by having the best service levels in an otherwise depleted market. **M**