

# BRAND MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY



## Brand Management & Strategy: Building and Sustaining a Valuable Brand

### Project #1

#### New Brand: Liquid Death

**Assignment Overview:** This could be a small group or individual assignment. This case resonates with students because it illustrates how a new brand with an unorthodox approach has made a big impact in an otherwise conservative industry comprised of commodity products.

This project was designed for students to apply the knowledge they have gained throughout the brand strategy and brand identity chapters. The assignment is to evaluate the phenomenal success of Liquid Death from initial launch to its first three years in business.

Students are expected to read the case background and do some external web research to sufficiently answer the questions below under “Assignment Deliverables” and develop a compelling document or slide deck (your choice).

#### Background: Liquid Death

Liquid Death launched in 2019 as a sort of joke by its founder, Mike Cessario. A marketing professional with a background in design, Cessario’s fledgling business has gone from tongue-in-cheek start-up to industry up-and-comer in three short years. Sales catapulted from \$2.8 million in 2019 to \$130 million in 2022. After securing a round of venture capital investment, the brand is now valued at \$700 million with sales projected to double in 2023.

After watching friends’ bands play at Van’s Warp Tour, Cessario knew some of the bands replaced a sponsor’s energy drink containers with water to stay hydrated while onstage. Additionally, straight-edge punk rockers who don’t drink might also enjoy a cutting-edge brand that appealed to their culture and aesthetic while being a healthy alternative. Cessario believed a healthy beverage could be marketed with an edge—much like some of the unhealthier alcohol, soft, and energy drinks brands had done in the past.



Cessario was hoping to impress his friends with the unique brand and actually pondered that a “dumb idea” like naming a healthy beverage, “Liquid Death,” just might actually work. What’s more, he knew it had to be interesting and that he would be creating an entertainment brand as well as a water brand. What Cessario didn’t expect was the overwhelmingly positive reception that the brand ultimately received. Perhaps more surprising was the much wider audience to whom the brand appealed—from moms to business executives and everyone in between. Liquid Death is just getting started and it will be interesting to see how much market share the brand can capture in the \$94 billion US bottled water market.

### **Background: Liquid Death Videos and Articles**

Liquid Death website:

<https://liquiddeath.com/>

How Liquid Death’s 40-year-old founder turned ‘the dumbest name’ and a Facebook post into a \$700 million water brand (video and article)

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/11/26/liquid-death-ceo-mike-cessario-we-chose-the-dumbest-possible-name-for-water.html>

How Liquid Death Made Canned Water SO METAL (6:37)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTOIIWSEExM>

Liquid Death – Deadliest Stuff on Earth?: (1:23) Commercial foul language

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeRADNpdKD4>

Liquid Death Big Game Commercial With Kids Hydrating at a Party (:30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQwt4rzmVxY>

Liquid Death x Martha Stewart Candle Commercial (1:09)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueEKYyzMdKA>



## Case Questions to Ponder

- What contributed to Liquid Death’s initial success?
- How important is brand identity in Liquid Death’s success?
- How important is the product versus the brand?
- What is your opinion on the “controversial” nature of some of the brand’s advertising?
- Research the people buying Liquid Death—is it the audience you would assume was the target?
- What is a traditional offering—what has Liquid Death done differently?

## Assignment Deliverable: Complete one of the following:

- 2-3 page document OR slide deck (20 slides maximum) that includes:
  - Situation Analysis—background, trends, environment, etc.
  - Brand Strategy—give a detailed analysis of the strategy including its brand positioning, target market, as well as how the brand was directed.
  - Brand Identity—how does the identity and strategy work together? Be specific.
  - Communications—examine the brand’s communications and how it supports the brand strategy.
  - Innovation—how has Liquid Death innovated and what part has that played in their success?